

St. Johnsbury Community Visit

Report and Action Plan ~ July 2015



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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I. Introduction

St. Johnsbury, the southern gateway to Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, is a shining example of what many Vermont towns strive for: a walkable downtown center; world renowned cultural institutions such as Catamount Arts, The Fairbanks Museum, and the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum; a beautiful welcome center; and a world class educational institution in the St Johnsbury Academy. VCRD staff and the Visiting Team were impressed with St. Johnsbury's many economic, cultural, and historic assets, but primarily with the dedication of residents and local leaders who are ready to take tangible action steps to advance the economy, build a sense of pride and belonging within the town, and share the story of what the town has to offer.

From its roots in manufacturing, innovation, and industry, St. Johnsbury has long been a hardworking town deeply dedicated to maintaining a strong local economy, a deep connection to its culture and heritage, and a high quality of life for all its residents. From the first Community Visit Day meeting to the final Resource Day session, we saw this hard working spirit demonstrated in consistently strong turnouts and an energy and drive among residents to move St. Johnsbury's vision forward. Much great work is already underway in this town, but residents are ready to build on past work, breathe new life into existing initiatives, and identify new actions that can be taken to leverage all that St. Johnsbury has to offer and ensure a vibrant and prosperous future for the town.

While Community Visits are designed to help communities come together, review major issues, develop priorities and line up for action, VCRD has a couple of other goals behind these efforts. We look to build new volunteerism and encourage more local folks to get involved in moving the community forward. We want to help build the connections of the community to human, technical, and funding resources from lead agencies and organizations in the state. And we want to help the Visiting Team that we build learn more about local needs and the dynamics in the diverse towns of rural Vermont so they can better serve these communities.

With over 280 local people participating in the process and over 150 volunteers now engaged in active Task Forces to advance priorities, we know that there is great energy for real progress in St. Johnsbury today. At the end of the Community Visit, we see strong, practical work plans and some direct connections being engaged for key support from; the Northeastern Vermont Development Association and Northern Communities Investment Corporation on downtown and riverfront revitalization efforts; RuralEdge on improving downtown housing; and the Agency of Human Services and the Department of Children and Families on warming shelter efforts. St. Johnsbury is well-positioned to successfully move its chosen projects forward.

It was not easy to choose priorities at the Community Meeting, and there are many other good ideas for action listed in the 'opportunities' section of this report that can inform the ongoing work of the Task Forces and be ground for work in town over time.

We look forward to working with the St. Johnsbury Task Forces as the priority projects identified in the process move forward efforts to:

- **Improve Community Communications and Promote a Positive Town Image**
- **Develop a St. Johnsbury Warming Shelter**
- **Redevelop and Revitalize Downtown Buildings**
- **Redevelop the St. Johnsbury Riverfront**
- **Improve Housing in Downtown St. Johnsbury**

The Task Forces working to advance these issues are already hard at work—please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the work plan section of this report).

The Vermont Council on Rural Development Community Visit Program is a structured process that enables a community to identify and prioritize goals, fosters local leadership, and serves as a catalyst for the development and realization of concrete, achievable action plans. The program in St. Johnsbury consisted of three phases:

1. On the **Community Visit Day** on April 8th, Visiting Team members heard testimony from St. Johnsbury residents in nine focus group areas that had earlier been identified by the local steering committee. Notes and issues raised in these sessions are detailed in Part VI. Based on the testimony received, the Vermont Council on Rural Development identified an initial list of the key **Opportunities** before the community (Part II).
2. The second stage of the Community Visit occurred at the **St. Johnsbury School** on May 12th when VCRD presented the Opportunities list and facilitated the review and prioritization of these issues by town residents. The resulting list of **St. Johnsbury Priorities** (in Part III) were then the focus for the formation of five new Task Forces established to build plans that would address them (see bulleted list above).
3. In the third phase of the Visit, the **Community Resource Day** on June 4th, the five new Task Forces met with a second Visiting Team to get organized, build Action Steps, and consider state, federal, non-profit, and private sector resources that may be available to support their work. The resulting **Task Force Work Plans** are listed in Part IV.

Resource Team Members (listed with contact information in Part VIII) signed on with a commitment to serve as sounding boards and referral agents for the St. Johnsbury Task Forces. Many of these visitors can be partners in the work before the committees; others can be great sources of advice or connection to other resources. **Call on them for help.**

Members of the Resource Team listened closely to the issues brought forward by town residents and have made suggestions in support of St. Johnsbury's efforts in each challenge area. **Their Recommendations** (Part V) ***are not prescriptions; community members are in the best position to make decisions about their next steps and strategies.*** Recognizing existing local efforts and the leadership of the Task Forces, these recommendations are offered, rather, as suggestions for potential next steps, and as lists of potential resources as the Task Forces make their way forward.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is dedicated to helping Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of St. Johnsbury as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to St. Johnsbury Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for St. Johnsbury projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members, when we can be of help.

There are many people to thank for making this Community Visit effort possible. Jody Fried, Executive Director of the Catamount Arts Center initially invited this process. We thank him for his dedication to the St. Johnsbury community. We deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the Steering Committee who helped guide the process from the beginning including; Dave Snedeker, Lorna Higgs, Susan Cherry, Dave Ormiston, Barbara Hatch, Jon Freeman, Jack Cummings, Jeffrey Moore, Tracy Zschau, Jody Fried, Shawn Timson, Loral Ruggles, Tara Robinson-holt, Joe Fox, Fred Laferriere, Haley Edmonson, Chris Wenger, Ann Hare, Elsa Eckhardt, and Irene Nagle.

We are very thankful for the dedication of Headmaster Tom Lovett and the faculty and students at St. Johnsbury Academy to the St. Johnsbury community and the Community Visit Process. The input of Academy faculty and students was invaluable to the process and to setting a direction for the future of the town.

We also appreciate St. Johnsbury's strong town leadership. John Hall and Dave Ormiston provided guidance and support throughout the process, and we were happy to have the new Town Manager Chad Whitehead join us for the Resource Day discussions.

We are grateful to the Caledonian Record for their coverage of the Community Visit meetings and their help getting the word out and inviting folks to the Visit events.

Mike Moser and the UVM Center for Rural Studies are terrific allies in our efforts and we appreciate their help building a briefing profile for the VCRD Community Visit Team.

Thanks must also go to the generous financial supporters of the process: USDA Rural Development, the Community National Bank, The Northeast Kingdom Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, the Green Mountain Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, and the Craftsbury Community Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation.

VCRD calls state, federal and non-profit leaders at the top of their game to participate in Community Visit processes. We are proud of the partners we get to work with—and especially the St. Johnsbury Team—they are the best of Vermont's public servants.

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of St. Johnsbury should be grateful to those who've stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Anna Rubin and Jody Fried: Improve Community Communications and Promoting a Positive Town Image; Shaun Donahue and Kelly Greaves: Develop a St. Johnsbury Warming Shelter; Adam and Andrea Kane: Redevelop the St. Johnsbury Riverfront; Seleem Choudhury: Revitalize and Redevelop Downtown Buildings; as well as the chair for the Improve Downtown Housing group (not yet identified).

VCRD especially wants to thank Mike Welch for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Chair. Mike is a dedicated and tireless community leader. We are so grateful to have had his thoughtful guidance and advice throughout the process and know that the St. Johnsbury task forces will be in good hands moving forward.

In the end, though, we are proud at VCRD that we work in a place where community is real and strong, and where local residents work together to get things done to make their communities the best they can possibly be. So we are grateful to all residents, young and old, who stand up for St. Johnsbury and who are lined up for the common good and best future to this wonderful place.

II. Initial List of Opportunities and Challenges

Identified by forums with community members on April 8 2015.

More than 200 St. Johnsbury residents joined with VCRD staff and a 30 member Visiting Team for the Community Visit Day on April 8, filling meeting rooms in the Fairbanks Museum, the North Congregational Church, and The Grace Methodist Church. They took time from their workday and other commitments to attend forums and a community dinner at the North Congregational Church, and to begin to work together in shaping the future of the town. The following issues emerged as initial challenges and opportunities. This list was presented back to community members at the Community Meeting on May 12 for voting and prioritization.

Expand Public Transportation

St. Johnsbury residents are proud of the great services offered by the local Rural Community Transportation. However, both young people and adults see the need for expanded or additional services both within St. Johnsbury and to destinations around Vermont and beyond. Additionally, residents see a need for improvements to the St. Johnsbury Park and Ride. A Public Transportation Task Force could identify ways to increase and promote public transportation options especially for seniors and youth, work with RCT to expand routes and access, make improvements to the existing Park and Ride and better publicize it, and explore ways to better connect commuters and students to available transportation services. Some residents would like to explore the idea of a free downtown circulator shuttle that makes stops at popular downtown destinations including St. Johnsbury RecFit, restaurants, Catamount Arts, and the Star Theater.

Improve Community Communications and Promote a Positive Town Image

A communication task force could work to develop a centralized hub for information on all community activities. The group could also identify ways to share the community-wide resource such as Front Porch Forum and/or via social networking platforms. The task force could use youth energy to advance these efforts, engaging them in multi-media and on-line celebration of the town and perhaps coordinate efforts with the St. Johnsbury School's new insert in The Caledonian Record. It could use the new and coordinated communications, and existing local media, to deliberately build a positive narrative about St. Johnsbury by developing affirmative story lines and content that delivers good press on great activities moving forward in town, celebrates youth volunteerism, school events and projects, business successes, and all the good work of St. Johnsbury residents.

Develop a Small Business Incubator

To encourage entrepreneurs and young people, and to seed its economic future, St. Johnsbury could build an incubator space for micro and startup businesses that would include shared resources and utilities, mutual support, cooperative marketing, and technical assistance from local and regional economic development organizations.

Develop a Warming Shelter in St. Johnsbury

Many St. Johnsbury residents see a growing need in their community for a warming or emergency housing shelter. A task force could come together to address this issue by framing a plan to build a warming shelter in St. Johnsbury. Some residents suggested that a warming shelter could be a good use of one of the vacant spaces in St. Johnsbury's downtown. The group could research appropriate locations for this purpose and identify state, federal, and private resources that might fund the initiative.

Improve and Expand Community Trails and Public Parks

St. Johnsbury is home to many natural and recreational assets and gathering spaces including the river front, a beautiful town forest, bike and walking paths, the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, Arlington Woods, and Arnold Park. However, residents feel that these assets are underutilized and in need of maintenance. A Community Parks and Trails task force could form to improve trails, bikeways and signage in these outdoor spaces, promote usage through newsletters or events, and explore ways to improve the connectivity of the trails to each other and to downtown.

Make Downtown St. Johnsbury a Destination

As a designated Vermont downtown, St. Johnsbury has a lot to offer visitors. The downtown is walkable with a beautiful new Welcome Center and well known cultural institutions such as the Athenaeum, Fairbanks Museum and Catamount Arts, and several downtown dining destinations. A task force could be developed to organize for St. Johnsbury to become a hotel/culinary/retail/cultural tourism destination. It would lead work to re-brand and invigorate downtown St. Johnsbury as a regional arts destination, a biking and canoeing center, an entrepreneurial center, a retail center, and a center for youth activities. St Johnsbury residents envision a logo or visual representation for St. Johnsbury and/or a slogan that advertises the town's many assets. The group could also develop heritage day events, history or arts parades, poetry and arts displays and celebrate museums and arts with downtown events matched with shopping and dining opportunities. Other ways the group might promote the town could be through coordinated and collaborated marketing among downtown businesses or through the filming and promotion of a video that captures St. Johnsbury's many assets. The group could collaborate with Discover St. Johnsbury on expanding these efforts.

Improve Public Safety

Residents of all ages and from all parts of the community want to spend more time enjoying downtown shops and restaurants but have safety concerns. A Task Force could form to address this issue by identifying strategies to increase safety in the community such as working with local law enforcement to explore community policing models, connecting law enforcement to schools and youth, implementing a "Blue Light Alarm System," or developing a neighborhood watch program.

Celebrate the Partnership of Schools and the Community

Residents are proud of the St. Johnsbury School with its great facilities and committed administration and teachers, the Good Shepherd School, and alternative programs like Cornerstone and the Caledonia School. The St. Johnsbury Academy is also an incredible asset offering a world-class education and many extracurricular opportunities. There are also many continuing education opportunities such as the Northeast Kingdom Learning Services, Springfield College, and the Community College of Vermont. However, residents are concerned about the relationship between schools and the community, and about both the internal and external perception of St. Johnsbury educational institutions. A task force could lead an initiative to improve the relationship between the schools and the community and promote a positive image of the schools. Actions could include; planning community events at the schools; collaborating with Academy students to host a community international day where international students could share their culture with the community; holding career fairs to connect students with career opportunities in St. Johnsbury and beyond; building mentorship and internship programs; or advancing community workshops and classes open to all.

Redevelop and Revitalize Downtown Buildings

St. Johnsbury residents are concerned by the number of vacant buildings in St. Johnsbury's downtown. Many residents would like the chance for the community to weigh in on the fate of these buildings, and many would like to see buildings repurposed for the improvement of the community. Redeveloped space could provide

galleries, places to eat out, community gathering spaces, and recreation opportunities. A Downtown Buildings Task Force could inventory the vacant and underused buildings and the community's wishes for these spaces, and lead an effort to create a strategic plan for the renovation, redevelopment, or removal of the buildings.

Improve Housing in Downtown St. Johnsbury

There is room and opportunity to expand and improve housing across the spectrum in downtown St. Johnsbury. A task force could look into opportunities and funding to develop mixed-use housing that would offer market rate apartments, affordable family housing, and additional senior housing. The group could also consider strategies to improve existing housing such as; improving building code enforcement; identifying ways to build relationships between landlords, tenants, and the community; or planning workshops to educate and train the community on do-it-yourself home repairs. St. Johnsbury residents are particularly interested in coming together to make improvements to the Depot Square Apartment building. A Task Force could work to develop a community vision and a strategy to move towards a building that is clean, safe, compliant with the building code, serves as a better anchor to downtown commerce and vitality and has a deeper connection to the broader St. Johnsbury community. The Housing Task Force could also identify funding for a full-time position with the Town to focus on housing and code enforcement.

Plan and Host a Community Celebration of St. Johnsbury Culture, Arts, and History

St. Johnsbury is a town that is rich in cultural, historical, and natural resources. Residents are proud of its thriving arts scene, its striking architecture, its scenic river, the proximity to outdoor recreation opportunity, and the many cultural, educational, and historic destinations. A group could form to plan and host an annual community celebration, festival, or event that celebrates the town's many assets for residents and visitors alike.

Build a Teen Center for St. Johnsbury Youth

St. Johnsbury youth would like to see the community organize around the development of a safe and fun youth center where they can meet friends and hang out. They would like to see a facility that offers free Wi-Fi, games, organized activities, a space to play music, an arts room, a weight room, and maybe a café. Youth and adults in St. Johnsbury point out the lack of a community space like a YMCA or Boys & Girls Club that is specifically available to youth. A Task Force dedicated to this work could explore potential locations for such a program, identify resources to fund the project, and also ensure accessibility by coordinating with local public transportation providers and the local schools.

Build a Community Composting Facility

A group could come together to build a community composting facility for St. Johnsbury residents to reduce food waste that is headed to landfills and to provide an opportunity to recover waste materials and convert it to a product which can enhance local soils and support local food production, either for backyard gardeners or at a larger scale.

Redevelop the St. Johnsbury Riverfront

The riverfront in St. Johnsbury is a wonderful but underutilized asset. A Riverfront Task Force could galvanize community volunteers to clean up the area and to plan longer-term strategic improvements. St. Johnsbury residents envision a park and a bike path along the river, a picnic area and outdoor seating, canoe access and rental, as well as an outdoor music venue such as a band shell to host concerts in the summer. Residents shared ideas for riverside development starting with a summer concert series to building a bike path and green space to link neighborhoods and transform the St. Johnsbury downtown. The group could review

previous designs for the area, ownership and potential partnering, and funding opportunities, and define a realistic and step by step platform to advance a community vision for riverside revival and redevelopment.

Advance Food Access and Economy in St. Johnsbury

St. Johnsbury residents are proud of their Food Coop, Farmers Market, and community gardens and Community Farm. They believe that demand is growing for local and high quality food, want to be sure that healthy local food is available and affordable to all, and would like to see the town as a leader in building the food economy in the region. Residents shared a number of ideas on promoting local food production and consumption: Many residents would like to see a community grocery store downtown that is accessible on foot. Some would like to see the Food Coop serve this role in a downtown location. Some would like to see a year-round indoor farmers market potentially connected to a shared commercial kitchen and educational opportunities. A new task force could engage with the St. Johnsbury Area Local Food Alliance to strategically advance the local economy by promoting healthy local foods for all residents.

Expand and Promote the St. Johnsbury Development Investment Fund

St. Johnsbury residents are interested in expanding downtown businesses and attracting new, creative economic opportunities to the downtown. The community recognizes its economic assets including world-class educational institutions, a prime location at the convergence of several major highways, and available space in its downtown. However, residents are concerned about the lack of businesses and economic growth downtown as well as the lack of job and career opportunities to attract youth and young families. Finding affordable start up and growth capital is crucial for small businesses and especially downtown businesses. St. Johnsbury could expand and promote its Development Investment Fund and ensure that the rules around it are as useful as possible to incent the development of small businesses in the community. A Task Force could be formed to bring together youth, staff from the Academy, business leaders, etc. to develop a deliberate investment strategy to identify and attract investors for economic and business development downtown, as well as market St. Johnsbury as an economic hub that draws in small businesses.

Advance Community Energy Initiatives

St. Johnsbury residents are interested in exploring opportunities to save energy, decrease electric and heating bills, and bolster community resilience. New volunteers could help to advance and strengthen the efforts of the St. Johnsbury Energy Committee. The group might offer educational opportunities about alternative energy and home weatherization, explore opportunities for community solar in St. Johnsbury, and look into bringing the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program to St. Johnsbury. The group could partner with organizations, such as NETO, a local provider of weatherization services, to promote and expand weatherization in the community, or plan a Community Weatherization Day.

Beautify Downtown

A Task Force could come together to bolster and strengthen the town's beautification committee to expand on the efforts already made to improve the look of St. Johnsbury's downtown. Flowers, benches, trees, attractive signage, and other amenities could be planned and implemented. The committee could plan community volunteer/clean up days to ensure the downtown stays clean and attractive for residents and visitors alike.

Increase Volunteerism

St. Johnsbury residents are proud of the strong sense of community and connectedness in their town, but some feel that they would like to know about more opportunities to get involved with their community and local

organizations and initiatives. Residents would like to see a clearing house where volunteer opportunities could be shared to better connect volunteers with individuals and organizations that need help. The St. Johnsbury Equal Time Exchange may be a key resource for this group, and the group may decide to focus their efforts on strengthening and promoting that database.

Build and Strengthen Neighborhood Associations

In the past, St. Johnsbury had several active and strong neighborhood organizations, but residents have noticed that activity and involvement have decreased over the years. Many residents would like to see these groups reinvigorated and revived. Groups could meet regularly to identify ways to improve safety in their community as well as ways to strengthen neighborhoods and community connection. Many residents would like to bring back the “welcome wagon” program to welcome new residents to their neighborhood. The Community Justice Center is available and willing to help support the development of these groups.

Two Opportunities were added at the Community Meeting session on May 12th:

Create a Committee to Address Seniors Issues

Build a St. Johnsbury Civic Center



Community members participated in forum discussions in meeting rooms around town on Community Visit Day.

III. St. Johnsbury Priorities

Determined by St. Johnsbury residents at the VCRD Community Meeting, May 12 2015

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, St. Johnsbury community members whittled down a list of 20 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with red and blue stickers, nearly 150 participants chose five issues that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the May 12 meeting by signing up for one of five Task Forces in the selected areas.

St. Johnsbury residents selected five priorities for future action:

✓ Improve Community Communications and Promote a Positive Town Image

A communication task force could work to develop a centralized hub for information on all community activities. The group could also identify ways to share the community-wide resource such as Front Porch Forum and/or via social networking platforms. The task force could use youth energy to advance these efforts, engaging them in multi-media and on-line celebration of the town and perhaps coordinate efforts with the St. Johnsbury School's new insert in The Caledonian Record. It could use the new and coordinated communications, and existing local media, to deliberately build a positive narrative about St. Johnsbury by developing affirmative story lines and content that delivers good press on great activities moving forward in town, celebrates youth volunteerism, school events and projects, business successes, and all the good work of St. Johnsbury residents.

✓ Develop a Warming Shelter in St. Johnsbury

Many St. Johnsbury residents see a growing need in their community for a warming or emergency housing shelter. A task force could come together to address this issue by framing a plan to build a warming shelter in St. Johnsbury. Some residents suggested that a warming shelter could be a good use of one of the vacant spaces in St. Johnsbury's downtown. The group could research appropriate locations for this purpose and identify state, federal, and private resources that might fund the initiative.

✓ Redevelop and Revitalize Downtown Buildings

St. Johnsbury residents are concerned by the number of vacant buildings in St. Johnsbury's downtown. Many residents would like the chance for the community to weigh in on the fate of these buildings, and many would like to see buildings repurposed for the improvement of the community. Redeveloped space could provide galleries, places to eat out, community gathering spaces, and recreation opportunities. A Downtown Buildings Task Force could inventory the vacant and underused buildings and the community's wishes for these spaces, and lead an effort to create a strategic plan for the renovation, redevelopment, or removal of the buildings.

✓ Improve Housing in Downtown St. Johnsbury

There is room and opportunity to expand and improve housing across the spectrum in downtown St. Johnsbury. A task force could look into opportunities and funding to develop mixed-use housing that would offer market rate apartments, affordable family housing, and additional senior housing. The group could also consider strategies to improve existing housing such as; improving building code enforcement; identifying ways to build relationships between landlords, tenants, and the community; or planning workshops to educate and train the community on do-it-yourself home repairs. St. Johnsbury residents are particularly interested in coming together to make improvements to the Depot Square Apartment building. A Task Force could work to develop a community vision and a strategy to move towards a building that is clean, safe, compliant with the building code, serves as a better anchor to downtown commerce and vitality and has a deeper connection to the broader St. Johnsbury community. The Housing Task Force could also identify funding for a full-time position with the Town to focus on housing and code enforcement.

✓ Redevelop the St. Johnsbury Riverfront

The riverfront in St. Johnsbury is a wonderful but underutilized asset. A Riverfront Task Force could galvanize community volunteers to clean up the area and to plan longer-term strategic improvements. St. Johnsbury residents envision a park and a bike path along the river, a picnic area and outdoor seating, canoe access and rental, as well as an outdoor music venue such as a band shell to host concerts in the summer. Residents shared ideas for riverside development starting with a summer concert series to building a bike path and green space to link neighborhoods and transform the St. Johnsbury downtown. The group could review previous designs for the area, ownership and potential partnering, and funding opportunities, and define a realistic and step by step platform to advance a community vision for riverside revival and redevelopment.



On Community Meeting Day, participants took part in a dot-voting exercise to select their top priorities for action.

IV. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, June 4 2015

St. Johnsbury Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. On Resource Day committee members worked closely with a facilitator and small resource teams to develop step-by-step action plans and to devise a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. This final phase of the program marks the time when residents truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.

Task Force: ✓ Improve Community Communications and Promote a Positive Town Image

Chairperson: **Anna Rubin** and **Jody Fried**

Facilitator: **Jenna Whitson** (VCRD)

Resource Leaders: **Steve Cook** (VT Dept of Tourism and Marketing), **Bethany Dunbar** (Center for an Ag Economy), **Emily Pelow Corbett** (VT Community Foundation)

A communication task force could work to develop a centralized hub for information on all community activities. The group could also identify ways to share the community-wide resource such as Front Porch Forum and/or via social networking platforms. The task force could use youth energy to advance these efforts, engaging them in multi-media and on-line celebration of the town and perhaps coordinate efforts with the St. Johnsbury School's new insert in The Caledonian Record. It could use the new and coordinated communications, and existing local media, to deliberately build a positive narrative about St. Johnsbury by developing affirmative story lines and content that delivers good press on great activities moving forward in town, celebrates youth volunteerism, school events and projects, business successes, and all the good work of St. Johnsbury residents.

Priority Action Steps:

1. Identify whether the necessary information is available to reach people and understand the internal and external perceptions of St. Johnsbury. Review current study, research, and survey material to determine whether more information is needed. If so, conduct a survey to collect needed info.
2. Develop an inventory of assets and things to celebrate in and about St. Johnsbury. Identify ways to celebrate these assets and share positive stories.
3. Develop the story and vision to share. Develop a strategy to share the story and vision utilizing avenues such as local and state media, Front Porch Forum, the Discover St. J website, etc.
4. Redo Gateways to St. Johnsbury including new welcome signs to spur pride among the community members and interest among tourists and visitors. Explore the opportunity to make the sign more inclusive by considering using French on the sign.
5. Invite newspaper reporters to community events.
6. Build a St. Johnsbury celebratory event for Summer of 2016 to highlight the completion of downtown development.
7. Involve students in capturing excitement about St. Johnsbury.
8. Build "Why St. J?" Stories with Story Corps and testimonials; leading with positive stories on why people are here and the good things happening.

Resources:

1. Northeast Kingdom Travel and Tourism
2. The Town of St. Johnsbury
3. Local teachers to involve students and engage the community.
4. Designated Downtown program for grants and technical support.
5. Bigger Businesses such as National Life offer employees volunteer hours. This may be a good place to find skilled volunteers.
6. The Vermont Community Foundation.
7. Commongoodvt.org offers trainings in storytelling and other skills.
8. Arts & cultural organizations such as the Fairbanks Museum, the Athenaeum, the Academy. Etc. This is a big audience we are trying to reach and these groups can help to coordinate on messaging.
9. The Caledonian Record
10. Vermont office of Tourism and Marketing for survey development and marketing consultation
11. State tourism website
12. There is a program where towns can partner with a Quebec town
13. Other towns that have done this work. For example – Pownal.
14. Statewide media – Julie Kelly at WCAX, Charlotte Albright at VPR
15. Ron Redmond – Executive Director of the Church Street Marketplace
16. Front Porch Forum

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Task Force: ✓ Develop a Warming Shelter in St. Johnsbury

Chairperson, Facilitators, and Resource Leaders:

Shaun Donahue (VT Agency of Human Services),

Kelly Greaves (VT DCF – Economic Services Division)

Many St. Johnsbury residents see a growing need in their community for a warming or emergency housing shelter. A task force could come together to address this issue by framing a plan to build a warming shelter in St. Johnsbury. Some residents suggested that a warming shelter could be a good use of one of the vacant spaces in St. Johnsbury's downtown. The group could research appropriate locations for this purpose and identify state, federal, and private resources that might fund the initiative.

Priority Action Steps:

1. Follow through to obtain approval from the Development Review Board for the Warming Shelter site.
2. Identify site.
3. Secure Funding (ESD; Office of Economic Opportunity; USDA RD; donations from community organizations)
4. Recruit and train volunteers for the Warming Shelter.
5. Equip the space.
6. Evaluate and work toward the development of Day Station site in St. Johnsbury potentially at NEKYS.
7. Work toward the development of a full time and year-round homeless shelter that can serve families.

Resources:

1. Proposal to ESD
2. Office of Economic Opportunity
3. USDA Rural Development
4. Donations from community organizations
5. Community Volunteers

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Task force members came together on Resource Day to begin to build action plans for the work ahead.

Task Force: ✓ Redevelop and Revitalize Downtown Buildings

Chairperson: **Seleem Choudhury**

Facilitator: **Paul Costello** (VCRD)

Resource Leader: **Harry Hunt** (Harry Hunt Architects)

St. Johnsbury residents are concerned by the number of vacant buildings in St. Johnsbury's downtown. Many residents would like the chance for the community to weigh in on the fate of these buildings, and many would like to see buildings repurposed for the improvement of the community. Redeveloped space could provide galleries, places to eat out, community gathering spaces, and recreation opportunities. A Downtown Buildings Task Force could inventory the vacant and underused buildings and the community's wishes for these spaces, and lead an effort to create a strategic plan for the renovation, redevelopment, or removal of the buildings.

Introduction:

Members of the Task Force reviewed buildings in and near downtown, efforts to address their redevelopment, and existing efforts to improve properties in St. Johnsbury. Buildings of concern with opportunities for improvement include the Ralston Mill, Depot Square, the Republican Block, the abandoned school (currently owned by 7th Day Adventists) the Armory Building and the Singer Building. The Task Force recognized that the Economic Restructuring Committee sponsored by the St. Johnsbury Chamber is working on economic issues critical to downtown redevelopment and analyzing data, including a recent UVM evaluation, that could be important in the work ahead. It also recognized that downtown streetscape efforts are in process and Main Street developments led by the Academy will have great benefits to the downtown. The team will coordinate or merger with the pre-existing effort.

Action Steps:

1. Share and review the UVM report on the economy of St. Johnsbury.
2. Inventory and evaluate buildings that could be revitalized.
3. Meet with building owners to ask if they would like help attracting business to their building and building activities in underused store-front spaces.
4. Develop a small investment fund to support enterprises that could occupy downtown storefront space.
5. Use empty spaces for arts, short term or part time leases, and activities that demonstrate vitality and economic activity; beautify windows for the seasons from Halloween to Christmas, and make empty storefronts art showcases.
6. Advance strong building codes in the downtown and bring code enforcement to a new level of consistency and rigor.
7. The Task Force listed other ideas for action that were logistical steps or for potential future work:
 - Set up a drop box to organize materials and communications.
 - Consider developing a major mural or other artworks at gateways or center of downtown.
 - Meet with the new owner of the Republican Block to involve him in improving the downtown.
 - Work to benefit the residents of Depot Square.
 - Help bring the Co-op and other businesses downtown.
 - Continue to work to get site control of Depot Square toward its redevelopment.
 - Bring the long discussion of the Armory Building to a conclusion by focusing toward a town decision on redevelopment of the removal of the building. Consider the development of a new and consolidated St. Johnsbury Public Services Building.

Resources

1. NCIC is ready to help by providing staffing support to this effort.
2. Paul Bruhn and Preservation Trust can help with inventory, consultation, and project development.
3. All St. Johnsbury residents are important to the project: many may be able to invest in the new St. J. Downtown Redevelopment Fund.
4. Rural Edge
5. The federal Economic Development Administration out of the Agency of Commerce could provide significant redevelopment funding.
6. New Markets Tax Credits through Vermont Rural Ventures
7. Community Development Block Grants through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development could be used for planning, feasibility or major development expenses.
8. EB5 could be useful.
9. The Kingdom Development Corporation and the St. Johnsbury Development Corporation.

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Task Force: ✓ Improve Housing in Downtown St. Johnsbury

Chairperson: TBD

Facilitator: **Jen Hollar** (VT Dept of Housing, Economic, and Community Development)

Resource Leaders: **Paul Dragon** (VT Office of Economic Opportunity), **Trisha Ingalls** (Rural Edge) **Kathleen Kanz** (VHCB)

There is room and opportunity to expand and improve housing across the spectrum in downtown St. Johnsbury. A task force could look into opportunities and funding to develop mixed-use housing that would offer market rate apartments, affordable family housing, and additional senior housing. The group could also consider strategies to improve existing housing such as; improving building code enforcement; identifying ways to build relationships between landlords, tenants, and the community; or planning workshops to educate and train the community on do-it-yourself home repairs. St. Johnsbury residents are particularly interested in coming together to make improvements to the Depot Square Apartment building. A Task Force could work to develop a community vision and a strategy to move towards a building that is clean, safe, compliant with the building code, serves as a better anchor to downtown commerce and vitality and has a deeper connection to the broader St. Johnsbury community. The Housing Task Force could also identify funding for a full-time position with the Town to focus on housing and code enforcement.

Priority Action Steps:

1. Code Enforcement – explore financing options for a staff person, and the possibility of sharing a contracted position with other towns.
2. Re-investment in properties – Incentives and Disincentives
 - a) Explore San Jose Responsible landlord model
 - b) Explore property tax incentives and revolving loan funds for improvements
3. Research into HAP contract vouchers (engage with HUD). Could the vouchers be moved to another building? HUD has revised the guidelines on moving vouchers.

Other Action Ideas:

1. Inventory of available housing and the current condition, the codes that apply to the housing stock, and the absentee landlords and properties.
2. Explore increasing housing options, looking at a mixture of housing including condos and cooperative housing.

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Task Force: ✓ Redevelop the St. Johnsbury Riverfront

Chairperson: **Adam and Andrea Kane**

Facilitator: **Lucy Leriche** (VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development)

Resource Leaders: **David Raphael** (Landworks), **Dave Snedeker** (NVDA)

The riverfront in St. Johnsbury is a wonderful but underutilized asset. A Riverfront Task Force could galvanize community volunteers to clean up the area and to plan longer-term strategic improvements. St. Johnsbury residents envision a park and a bike path along the river, a picnic area and outdoor seating, canoe access and rental, as well as an outdoor music venue such as a band shell to host concerts in the summer. Residents shared ideas for riverside development starting with a summer concert series to building a bike path and green space to link neighborhoods and transform the St. Johnsbury downtown. The group could review previous designs for the area, ownership and potential partnering, and funding opportunities, and define a realistic and step by step platform to advance a community vision for riverside revival and redevelopment.

Priority Action Steps:

1. Build an organizational structure for St. Johnsbury Riverfront Redevelopment with Sub-Committees to take action. Identify and fill any gaps in expertise/knowledge.
2. Develop a communications plan that includes:
 - a) Outreach messaging to landowners addressing past challenges with respect for their rights and apology for any past ;
 - b) Outreach to everyone in the community on the opportunities ahead.
 - c) A history of the St. Johnsbury waterfront and attempts to redevelop it.
 - d) A mapping of existing conditions on the riverfront that includes deed research, landowners, and activities.
3. Reach out to State/Federal Agencies regarding tracks, permits, conditions, longer term relationships for redevelopment. Involve and partner with land-owners
4. Build strong and long-term relationships with all pertinent constituencies, stakeholders, potential users, volunteers, young people, and municipality.
5. Do a group site visit first, then have a town cleanup day on appropriate sites. This can be a fun family day but also a work day.
6. Focus first on the donated 8 acres already available for public purposes.
7. Research potential funding support for project implementation.

Other Potential Action Ideas:

1. Revisit plans/roll out past maps to evaluate and understand work that has been done in the past
2. Identify natural assets along the river. Explore the waterway for recreational use. Map out the area and identify any potential risks.
3. Research the current land condition and brownfield issues.
4. Explore a connection with the Rail Trail.
5. Outdoor art/projection on buildings
6. Investigate commercial development

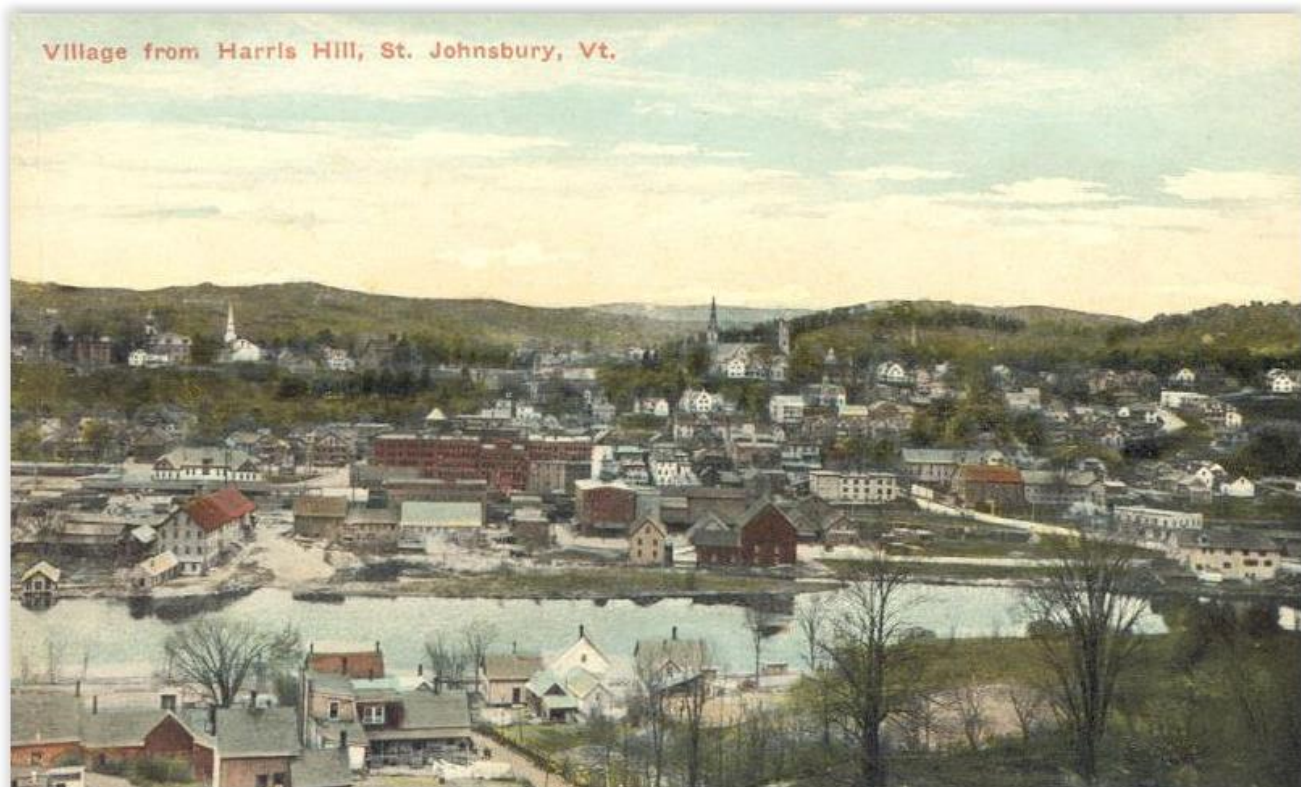
Resources:

1. Brownfields Grants (with assistance from NVDA)
2. Bike and Pedestrian Funding from Agency of Transportation
3. Transportation Alternatives
4. Forests Parks and Recreations Trails Grants
5. CDBG
6. Northern Border Regulatory Commission Grants
7. Municipal Planning Grants
8. Yearly St. J. Tax Mapping (could include some deed research)
9. USDA Rural Development Grants
10. Preservation Trust of Vermont
11. Vermont Community Foundation

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V. Resource Team Recommendations

Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state, and agree to serve as partners and advisors to the St. Johnsbury Task Forces. Their recommendations below encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs. It is hoped that community members will turn frequently to these pages for concrete ideas, resources and support. Resource Team members are eager to support the Task Forces as they begin their work.

✓ Improve Community Communications and Promote a Positive Town Image

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

Involving Students and Youth:

Many schools now have a community service component to their curriculum. If the St. Johnsbury Academy does, then partner with the school to identify community service projects to work together on and then publicize the projects. This encourages student participation and helps to develop the narrative of positive community collaboration, support, and service.

Work with art students in schools to develop artwork and/or a new logo for St. Johnsbury. Have a contest with prizes donated for the winners in different categories.

Create internships for student journalists, photographers, bloggers, etc. to promote St. Johnsbury and share your story. In the Community Visit session at the Academy, students expressed an interest in developing a video of St. J. from the eyes of young people and some on-line ways that teens could promote a positive image of the community both internally and well beyond the town. Young people could be encouraged and supported to take leadership in media work so they can produce their own stories in print, social media and radio. The task force could also create internships within municipal government and community organizations to encourage communication, local connection, and participation.

Generating Positive Stories/Media/Press:

The task force could initiate regular meetings with the Caledonian Record Editorial Board to discuss positive things happening in town and work with the paper to create a monthly column that highlights positive community stories. For example, in the Rutland Herald, they have started an "I Heart Rutland" column where residents can submit commentaries about their Rutland experience – why they chose to stay/move there, and why they love their community. Another task would be for the task force to produce at least one positive story or commentary a month about the working groups advancing community efforts (like riverfront activities), or about businesses that are doing particularly creative things. Multiple voices will make for dynamic content and build momentum.

A task force subcommittee could be formed to coordinate efforts to reach out to statewide media outlets in print, television, and radio.

The task force could sponsor a local competition for stories and a slogan. Use Main Street windows to share the stories, get short stories everywhere you can in surprising ways – paper place mats at the diner, hanging off the gas tanks so folks have something to read while pumping gas, in the town water bills, on grocery bags, etc.

Highlight citizens, projects, photos and stories in a quarterly insert in the Caledonia Record.

Marketing St. Johnsbury

Work with the VT Department of Tourism and Marketing to promote the area within and outside of Vermont. Share you assets broadly including Dog Mountain, Maple Place, Catamount Arts, Fairbanks Museum, and the Athenaeum.

Conduct a brand strategy workshop. The purpose of this would be to distill the essence of the St. Johnsbury brand, as well as get everyone on the same page. The deliverables might be Brand Attributes, Tone/Voice, Brand Positioning and Brand Promise. This can then be turned into either a Talking Points document (get everyone singing from the same songbook) or an elevator pitch. Perhaps a logo and slogan follow.

Consider hiring a public relations firm and seek grants to finance this work (or find one willing to volunteer!). The consultant could help the community advance and share their brand and support PR, graphic design, and/or marketing.

Make sure that St. Johnsbury events and attractions are posted on the new Vermont Department of Tourism's website: www.vermontvacation.com.

Building a sense of community and pride and improving Community Communication:

Inventory all available channels of communication that are available to you. Identify any communication gaps and create ways to fill those gaps.

Identify a gathering spot where community members can come together to socialize, work, and/or be creative. Some towns organize neighborhood block parties in all parts of town that include all parts of the community.

Should the task force carry out a community visioning process – what should St. Johnsbury look be like, what should be the salient features of the town in say 2030? What values should come to mind when one thinks of St. Johnsbury? If St. J has already done this type of exercise, revisit the vision and remind folks of the goals for the future and now. From the vision comes the foundation for rallying and focusing community volunteer energy, for building self-image and ultimately for branding and a marketing campaign. Public participation should be frequent and meaningful, including project design, identification of community values, definition of alternate visions, and selection of final vision statement.

Develop a social media campaign focused on St. J. residents. Before others will believe the St. J. story, people in town need to embrace it. Channels like Facebook and Instagram are natural for this. Engage as many people as you can from all neighborhoods/communities. Make sure to decide on a set of language and hash tags to insure that everything you do online is linked to one another. Have at least one person in each work group in town agree to post regularly. Along with the social media campaign, conduct a poster campaign in town to bring it offline. Partner with a hip local company with a successful social media campaign to expand community communications.

Send out a monthly St. Johnsbury Constant Contact newsletter or Front Porch Forum post to all residents. This could come from the group spearheading the St. Johnsbury revitalization/economic development or from the Selectboard or another civic group.

Another idea would be to develop a St. Johnsbury Awards Program. Reinforce all that is good about the people and their actions by recognizing St. J. Heroes.

Celebrate St. J. Day and make it an annual event.

Create a page on the town's or Chamber's website that acts as a centralized hub for information on all community activities. Then concentrate on driving traffic to that page from postings on Front Porch Forum, Facebook, getting other local sites to link to it, and perhaps even some google advertising. Allow people to submit events via an online form and keep the page up to date and well-maintained. Make it mobile-friendly. Also identify ways to share this information with residents that do not access information online – perhaps by working with the Caledonian Record to publish a regular calendar update. Front Porch Forum also has a community calendar function that can record events posted in the forum. Huddle around a computer and look at other city's web pages and critique them. Look at events pages of on-line periodicals, e.g. Seven Days, or Madison, WI, www.isthmus.com. Think about how you and others use those pages, what works, and what doesn't.

Identify “key communicators” or ambassadors to help change the local dialogue. These are people who talk a lot and who are recognized as knowing “what’s going on.” Host gatherings with these folks that highlight surprising and positive features of the community. Encourage them to talk to their friends and neighbors, and to write commentaries and letters to the editor. Attitudes will begin to change in an organic way.

Create a Facebook Group to coordinate communication among those active in the Task Force. This works well for discussion, scheduling and gathering comment.

Hang large banners across major gateways and thoroughfares highlighting St. Johnsbury's assets and welcome residents and visitors to town.

Use technology to support the neighborhood associations. Give each group a page on the town website.

There are lots of ideas here and not all can happen at once! Have confidence and know there will be big payoff with regular small steps—and take it a day at a time!

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION TASK FORCE:

CommonGood Vermont is a great source for trainings in communications and story-telling. Contact Project Director Lauren-Glenn Davitian at 862-1645 ext. 12 or davitian@cctv.org.

Visit the Assets Based Community Development Institute of Northwestern University's website for strategies on how to consider local assets as the primary building blocks of sustainable community development: <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/>.

Talk to other Vermont communities and local newspapers about ways they have worked together to share positive local news. One great contact would be the Brattleboro Commons, an independent non-profit paper in Windham County. Check out this Seven Days article on three particularly successful local papers: <http://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/how-three-vermont-media-companies-keep-the-presses-rolling/Content?oid=2627304>. Rob Mitchell is the editor at the Rutland Herald/Times Argus that created the “I

Heart Rutland” series. He can be reached at rob.mitchell@rutlandherald.com. Elsie Gilmore is a marketing and design consultant who created a parallel grassroots campaign called “Rutland Uprising” that was later adopted by the local paper. Her website is www.elsiegilmore.com. Johanna Tebbs Young is a freelance writer and author of columns such as “Circles of Community” and “Rutland Uprising.” She can be reached at joanna@wisdomwithinink.com.

South Burlington is currently going through a re-branding process and is working with an out-of-state firm that specializes in municipalities. It may be helpful to connect with them to learn more about their work and their plan for the work ahead.

The Department of Tourism and Marketing can be a key resource for marketing support, survey development, brand development, and reaching out-of-state visitors. You can reach out to Steve Cook, Deputy Commissioner, at 522-2896 or steve.cook@state.vt.us.

The Vermont Arts Council has small grants available that could support community art projects.

National Service organizations such as AmeriCorps or VISTA could offer a member to help with this work. Contact SerVermont for more information: www.servermont.vermont.gov.

Kingdom Access television could be a good partner for sharing positive community stories and advertising local events.

Look into grant programs at the Vermont Community Foundation, www.vermontcf.org, especially our Northeast Kingdom Fund program and our community fund grant rounds including Small and Inspiring Grants up \$2,500 for building social capital (particularly good for work around bringing people together to promote a positive town image) and our Innovations and Collaborations program up to \$20K.

Use the Vermont Directory of Foundations site to search for grant opportunities by program/project type and region. <http://fdovermont.foundationcenter.org/>

Utilize the Vermont Ambassador Program through the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing to enhance customer service skills and knowledge about Vermont among people who interact with the public. http://accd.vermont.gov/tourism_and_marketing/hospitality/ambassador

Connect with Gary Holloway, the Downtown Program Coordinator at the VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development. He can be reached at 828-3220 or gary.holloway@state.vt.us.

✓ Develop a Warming Shelter in St. Johnsbury

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

Visit with other communities that have warming shelters, such as those in Brattleboro and Burlington, so you can get a stronger sense of what it entails to start one and keep it going. Some towns have formal stand-alone nonprofits – like COTS in Burlington – others are more volunteer oriented and operate limited schedules, often associated with churches, like the Morningside warming shelter in Brattleboro. Other communities / organizations that have worked extensively on this issue include; the Upper Valley Haven in White River

Junction, the John Graham Shelter in Vergennes, the Samaritan House in St. Albans, and the Harbor Place in Shelburne.

Create a “pop up shelter” during the harshest months using volunteer time and effort to assess need, utilize vacant space or community space (such as VFW, local churches etc.). Consider alternate uses for the space when it is not serving as an emergency resource.

Encourage full community participation on housing and homelessness. Don’t forget to engage the faith based community. Brattleboro uses a church basement for overnight accommodations.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE WARMING SHELTER TASK FORCE:

Look into financing models through The Vermont Community Loan Fund. VCLF was involved in financing the new Harbor Place Shelter in Shelburne. The VCLF Executive Director, Will Belongia, can be contact at 223-4428 or at will@vclf.org.

Consider using HUD Community Development Block Grant funding through the Vermont Community Development Program to begin accessing sites, picking sites and implementing longer term vision. Nathan Cleveland is the contact for this program and he can be reached at 828 -2998, nathan.cleveland@state.vt.us.

Use USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Grant and Loan funding to implement this project. The program provides grants up to \$50,000 to non-profits and municipalities on a cost sharing basis for equipment, acquisition and construction of essential community facilities. The contact at the St. Johnsbury USDA RD office is Misty Sinsigalli (misty.sinsigalli@vt.usda.gov or at 748-8746).

Jan Demers is the Executive Director at CVOEO in Burlington has experience with warming shelter development and has offered to be a resource for the group 862-2771 ext. 740 or at jdemers@cvoeo.org. Doug Sinclair, President of the Middlebury Community Cares Coalition, has also offered to be a resource for the group 989-9746 or jdsinclair@ripton-coop.net.

Other contacts to learn more about success stories:

Sara Kobylenski, Upper Valley Haven in White River Junction, sarak@uppervalleyhaven.org or 478-1802
Linda Ryan, The Samaritan House in St. Albans, director@samaritanhouseinc.com or 527-0847

Involve NEKCA, faith leaders, and NEKYS. If you have a strong cross sectoral approach, the Vermont Community Foundation NEK Fund would likely be interested in providing some seed funding. The application deadline for this year is at the beginning of August. Contact Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup at 288-3355 ext. 295 or email cilstrup@vermontcf.org.

This idea is also being discussed by the “A Team,” a group of health care and social service leaders organized by NVRH CEO Paul Bengston (p.bengston@nvrh.org), Rural Edge (Trisha Ingalls, Dir. Community Relations, trishai@ruraledge.org) and NKHS (Doug Bouchard, ED, dbouchard@nkhs.net). Survey to find other functions that can be co-located with a warming shelter, if possible. For example, the Vermont Foodbank (John Sayles, CEO jsayles@vtfoodbank.org) is exploring locations for a small distribution center in the NEK, and the right property may be able to accommodate both and make a project more economically feasible. This is also an opportunity to do an in-depth study of homelessness in St. J and the NEK, to understand more exactly what the need is and how it can best be met.

✓ Redevelop and Revitalize Downtown Buildings

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

Invite all building owners to participate in regular meetings on the revitalization effort, including those the community believes are disinterested.

Conduct an inventory to identify existing assets as well as gaps in services/amenities/businesses.

Survey local residents about services and stores they'd like to see downtown.

Consider pop-up stores, galleries or restaurants in vacant store fronts to create buzz and demonstrate feasibility.

This task force will need to be working on a year to year plan to accomplish the long-term goals.

Seek grant funding and private funding to establish a business competition. Consider awarding free rent, services etc. to targeted types of businesses and best business plans.

Decide what uses of the buildings would meet the goals and vision you have. Think about opportunities to engage St. Johnsbury residents and youth and create significant economic activity and jobs.

Consider developing a business incubator. Perhaps it could also include an artist studio or gallery as well as a community gathering space. Also focus your efforts on light industry, internet-based businesses, food products, the arts, and building trades. Work with Lars Torres, the Director of Generator VT in Burlington, to do a "pop up" makers space. He can be reached at director@generatorvt.com.

After conducting an inventory of existing businesses/activities and gaps in services, hold a visioning process with local residents about what they want to see in the downtown area. Bring in trained, neutral facilitators to host the events. Ensure that town planning and zoning are involved as well as town officials and staff.

Host community work days to engage the broad community in clean-up efforts and other activities such as painting, artwork or landscaping that can be done today to improve the downtown and infuse the area with community energy.

Consider favorable lease terms for new tenants in identified high priority spaces.

Create a Downtown Master Plan.

Educate land owners about tax credit opportunities.

To start changing the feel of vacant storefronts in the short-term and encourage community participation in envisioning a revitalized downtown, work with landowners to turn vacant storefronts into places to display art created by community members. The message could be "this space isn't empty...it's filled with opportunity."

Engage state and federal partners including USDA Rural Development, local economic development organizations like NCIC and NVDA, Preservation Trust of Vermont, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development Downtown Program, etc. Rural Edge and other affordable housing developers could also be important partners in the conversation. This is a large-scale project that will of course need additional buy-in from property owners.

Start setting aside municipal dollars each year for downtown revitalization efforts.

Connect with Discover St. Johnsbury to build on the work that has already been accomplished.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN TASK FORCE:

Preservation Trust of Vermont could be a key resource for this task force. Paul Bruhn is the indispensable leader in Vermont in preservation and redevelopment projects across the state. He can be reached at 343-0595 or paul@ptvermont.org.

Visit Winooski and Barre to learn more about their revitalization efforts and plans. Contact the Mayor of Winooski, Seth Leonard, at sleonard@winooskivt.org, and the Mayor of Barre, Thom Lauzon at tlauzon@charter.net. Also contact the Downtown Barre Partnership to learn more about their work at 477-2967.

Manchester, Vermont just went through some strategic planning and developed a new welcome center. Berta Maginniss is the Executive Director of the Visitor's Welcome Center and Chamber Office. She can be reached at 362-6313 ext 203.

Talk to the Town of Wilmington. They had/have a similar problem after Tropical Storm Irene. There was a group of private investors that raised capital to purchase and renovate some of the buildings. The Town Manager, Scott Murphy can be reached at 464-8477 or smurphy@wilmingtonvt.us.

The Downtown Rutland Partnership has achieved a near 90% storefront occupancy rate. Contact Executive Director Mike Coppinger at mcoppinger@rutlanddowntown.com.

USDA Rural Development could be a resource for funding and/or technical assistance. Contact USDA State Director Ted Brady at 828-6080 or at ted.brady@vt.usda.gov.

Consider using HUD Community Development Block Grant funding through the Vermont Community Development Program. Nathan Cleveland is the contact for this program: 828 -2998, nathan.cleveland@state.vt.us.

Dave Snedeker with the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) will be a key resource for the group. He can be reached at dsnedeker@nvda.net.

Local banks could be a source for funding and support.

Vermont Dept. of Housing and Community Development Division for Historic Preservation could be a good resource. The State Historic Preservation Officer is Laura Trieschmann, laura.trieschmann@state.vt.us or at 828-3222. Tax Credits and/or grants may be available. Contact Caitlin Corkins at 828-3047 or Caitlin.corkins@state.vt.us.

USDA Rural Development Rural Business Development Grant program. The RBDG program allows municipalities, non-profits and cooperatives to access grant funds to create or sustain jobs in rural small businesses. St. Johnsbury and the Northeast Kingdom REAP Zone receive special consideration for these grant funds. Grants are available up to \$500,000 for technical assistance to small businesses, equipment, construction, and other activities. Contact Susi Poland, Business Programs Specialist, 828-6002, susan.poland@vt.usda.gov.

ACCD, Municipal Planning Grants. Contact Annina Seiler, Grants Administrator 828-1948.
http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/funding/overview/municipal_planning_grants

Consider Green Mountain Power as a partner. Though their focus is on Rutland, they are new to serving St. J and could be a great local partner.

✓ Improve Housing in Downtown St. Johnsbury

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

Review what other towns are doing to address affordable housing. Some, like Burlington, have reports. <http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/sites/default/files/Mayor/05-2014%20Burlington%20Downtown%20Housing%20Strategy%20Report.pdf>. Reviewing these for ideas and potentially creating one could be helpful.

Consider hosting a community meeting for area landlords to hear their concerns and figure out how to work better together.

One Visiting Team member sees a connection between gaining site control of Depot Square and pursuing code enforcement. The most effective vehicle for change in this regard may be zoning regulation.

Continue to build support for redeveloping Depot Square. Initiate regular meetings with potential developers / purchasers, and invite the existing owner to regular discussions with the housing committee mentioned above to begin addressing issues.

Have the task force or committee visit and learn about similar large scale downtown blighted property redevelopment, specifically Armory Square in Windsor.

Hire a code enforcement officer, or evaluate roles and responsibilities in existing related positions and see if there is room to reallocate responsibilities among some staff to then make room in someone's job description to be the liaison to property owners and start making an impact.

On developing a shared community vision: To help residents of the apartment building and other downtown residents, business leaders, shoppers, etc. form a shared sense of place, create a hands-on project that a diverse group of community members can do together. For example, community members representing all groups of downtown users can participate in a "photo voice" project with the help of a local art group or photographer. The project would provide cameras and basic training to participants, who could work together

to create an exhibit displaying their various perspectives on life downtown. Photo voice project leader: Mary Cohen, NeighborWorks of Western Vermont, mcohen@nwwvt.org.

It may be beneficial to merge this committee as a sub-group of the Downtown Revitalization Task Force. Please don't forget to actively include the residents in this process so that whatever you do fits their needs and doesn't end up marginalizing or pushing out the current population in favor of a gentrified downtown. While it's tempting to think of Depot Square as a problem that must be gotten rid of, the community will be much better off if you can use an inclusive process that meets everyone's needs. Champlain Housing Trust in Burlington built a housing cooperative as a good example of an inclusive redevelopment process. They were able to take a challenging building and redevelop it into owner-occupied co-op apartments for low-income folks with a strong sense of community and ownership.

Obtain Neighborhood Development Area Designation for downtown and surrounding area
http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization/vermont_neighborhoods.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE HOUSING TASK FORCE:

The Vermont Housing Finance Agency and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) have a Preservation Council and funding from the McArthur Foundation to preserve affordable housing. It may be a good source of capital toward potential purchase of the Depot St. property. Gus Seelig, Executive Director of VHCB can be reached at 828-3251 or at gus@vhcb.org. VHFA can be reached at 864-5743.

VHCB is a source of funding for the preservation of existing affordable housing.

RuralEdge could be a key partner for this group. Contact Trisha Ingalls at 473-3925 or at trishai@ruraledge.org.

Potential Developers: Vermont State Housing Authority, Richard Williams, 828-3295; Trisha Ingalls, Rural Edge, 473-3925; Kathy Beyer, Housing Vermont, 863-8424

Habitat International is doing some very innovative work with neighborhood revitalization. (<http://www.habitat.org/neighborhood/about>). If Habitat for Humanity is not active in St. J it might be worth reaching out to the Littleton or Montpelier chapters.

Utilize Federal and State Historic Tax Credits from the VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Contact Caitlin Corkins at 828-3047 or Caitlin.corkins@state.vt.us.

The team could look at model code enforcement strategies across the country:
<https://sonaomaha.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/examples-of-code-enforcement-and-healthy-homes.pdf>.

Or review the housing revitalization strategy for downtown Rutland, with a focus on housing:
http://greenscreen.s3.amazonaws.com/Rutland-Northwest-Neighborhood%20Recommended_Strategies_for_Revitalization_FINAL_with_maps_03-11-14.pdf

✓ Redevelop the St. Johnsbury Riverfront

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

Some of the planning and development along the riverfront could take years; but some things can be done immediately. The Task Force should build a short list of things that could be immediately accomplished with volunteer labor and minimal resources then invite the community and volunteers from neighboring towns to join in. One place to start could be with a river clean-up. Make it a fun event with music and sponsors who provide refreshments. Perhaps connect this event with a Farmer's Market or concert. Make sure to collect sign-ins and capture contact information to connect with interested folks to begin to build a volunteer/supporter database. These types of events will help to build buy-in and support and help folks develop a connection to the area.

There could be a great opportunity here to work with the St. Johnsbury Academy, Lyndon State College, and any other technical or alternative education programs to engage young people in projects around the riverfront. Some could be invited to serve on the task force.

All local conservation partners including the Vermont Rivers Conservancy, Vermont Land Trust, and the Vermont Chapter of the Nature Conservancy could be convened to get their help and buy-in for the creation of trails and development of a river walk.

After a site clean-up, consider using the space for other recreational, cultural, and community events such as local farmers' markets, antique car shows, local heritage and other community events.

A longer term strategy would be to create a riverfront master plan with implementation schedule. Learn about best practices for working with private landowners and discuss riverfront best practices with experts (see below).

Hold visioning processes with local residents around what they want to see on the St. Johnsbury Riverfront. Make sure to have these held informally as well as formally (scheduled and open to public to stop in any time throughout the day and brainstorm). Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a great way to execute these kinds of community processes because it engages everyone and focuses on a future vision, not solving a problem. Champlain College has a national training center for AI (<http://www.champlain.edu/appreciativeinquiry>) that may be a resource. Another fun way to explore design is Pechkucha (<http://www.pechakucha.org/>). Kate Stephenson, the Executive Director at Yestermorrow design school in Waitsfield has put these on before, and might be interested in talking about how this would work for St. J (kate@yestermorrow.org).

Once a vision is established, develop a community "design charrette" that exposes people to the vision and plan. Some of this has already been done in the past and NVDA can share with the group. The idea would be to develop a physical design scheme for what the riverfront could look like. Share the vision with key stakeholder groups to create buy-in. Evaluate costs and viability for the vision (including zoning, ownership, possible environmental permitting considerations, transportation nodes and access). Build a constituency of support. Raise funds locally and through potential grants.

Make sure to be prepared with a plan around parking.

Make visits to communities where they have worked on improving or redeveloping their riverfront spaces. Visits may include trips to Burlington, Middlebury, Vergennes, or Manchester.

Build publicity. Ask local champions to write a letters to the editor and/or Front Porch Forum posts to start the conversation and help residents to imagine the possibilities and potential of the space.

When considering the waterfront development be sure to consider the potential impact of unpredictable weather patterns. There are now a lot of great resources out there around mitigation, adaptation and resilience that you may want to consider when making any large scale (or expensive) alterations to the river front or the infrastructure on the banks. UVM extension would be a good resource here and the Rubenstein School at UVM would be another. COVER home repair in the Upper Valley (coverhomerepair.org) might also have some good thoughts on river and flood plain redevelopment.

While some of this work can be paid for thorough fundraising efforts, the Task Force could also explore the potential for some funding through the 1% local option tax and invest it in riverfront development – an investment that could have a strong return in quality of life, tourism, and economic development in the town. The Town of Killington has successfully implemented a 1% local option tax. To learn more contact Town Manager Seth Webb at sethwebb@town.killington.vt.us or at 422-3241.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE RIVERFRONT TASK FORCE:

The Northern Forest Canoe Trail could be a great resource for questions and support around riverfront recreational access. Executive Director Karrie Thomas can be reached at 496-0755 or at karrie@northernforestcanoetrail.org.

The Northern Border Regional Commission provides grants for infrastructure project along the Northern Border communities of VT, NH, ME, and NY. Contact Mark Carano, the Federal Co-Chair at 603-481-0263.

USDA Rural Development could be a resource for funding and/or technical assistance. Contact USDA State Director Ted Brady at 828-6080 or at ted.brady@vt.usda.gov. USDA Rural Development Rural Business Development Grant program could be a financial resource. The RBDG program allows municipalities, non-profits and cooperatives to access grant funds to create or sustain jobs in rural small businesses. Contact Susi Poland, Business Programs Specialist at 828 6002 or at susan.poland@vt.usda.gov.

Vermont Agency of Transportation. Federal and state transportation money can be used to build bike paths, pedestrian paths and other non-motorized transportation projects. Contact Jon Kaplan, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Manager at jon.kaplan@state.vt.us or at 828-0059.

Check out the Burlington Waterfront Redevelopment plan for ideas on the project, visioning processes, and connecting with the public. <http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/planBTV>. Consult with the team at CEDO who led the waterfront redevelopment effort. Also search other planning processes for redevelopment.

The Rutland Creek Path connects downtown to Pine Hill Park and Giorgetti Park where there are biking and hiking trails, ball fields, and a skating rink. Susan Schreibman of the Rutland Planning Commission can describe how the team planned, funded and built the multiuse path. She can be reached at susan@rutlandrpc.org.

For some of the smaller projects, such as band shells, you should consider the Northeast Kingdom Fund. Contact Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup at 388-3355 or at cilstrup@vermontcf.org.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources River Management Program can provide info on stream economy and management. Call 828-1535.

The Department of Tourism and Marketing is available to provide media relations and publicity assistance about new attractions in Vermont. Contact Deputy Commissioner Steve Cook at steve.cook@state.vt.us or 828-3516.

Look into the Agency of Natural Resources Brownfields Economic Revitalization Alliance (BERA) <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/sms/RCPP/BERA.htm>. Contact Trish Coppelino at patricia.coppelino@state.vt.us.

You may be able to access an Agency of Commerce and Community Development Municipal Planning Grant. http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/funding/overview/municipal_planning_grants Contact Annina Seiler, Grants Administrator, at 828-1948 or at annina.seiler@state.vt.us.

Contact the Department of Forest Parks and Recreation's Recreation Trails Grant Program by reaching out to Sherry Winnie, the Recreation Trails Program Administrator at 760-8450 or at sherry.winnie@state.vt.us.

Talk to the Waterbury Rotary. They have and manage a space in Waterbury called Rusty Parker Memorial Park to provide summer concerts in a band shell that is very well attended. This is a great "job" for one of the local Lion/Rotary/VFW groups to take on. <http://portal.clubrunner.ca/1419/>

The Vermont Downtown Program could help access funds or tax credits. Gary Holloway is the Downtown Programs Coordinator and can be reached at 828-3220 or at gary.holloway@state.vt.us.

Northeastern Vermont Development Association could be key partners in this work. Contact Dave Snedeker at 748-5181 x15 or at dsnedeker@nvda.net.

Other communities that have done significant riverside development over the last few years include: Springfield, Stowe, Winooski, Montpelier, Waitsfield, Bennington, Manchester – any and all could be visited to learn how they were successful.

White River Jct. has done some interesting development along the river – contact the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation at 295-3710.

The Task Force may ultimately need some professional help. David Raphael of Landworks could be a potential contractor, or other potential planning and implementation partners could be evaluated, to help the Task Force and community build a unifying design for improvements, trails, and infrastructure features on the riverfront. David can be reached at davidr@landworksvt.com or at 388-3011.

VI. The Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 200 St. Johnsbury residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on April 8 2015

Although the prioritization work of the Community Visit Program requires a town to decide what is most important as it moves forward with Task Forces, nothing is lost in the process from the long list of concerns and ideas expressed in early community focus sessions. Many interesting and diverse thoughts are represented here, and are presented as a reminder of issues explored, and a possible foundation for future projects.

Transportation and Tourism

Resource Team: John E. Adams, Alex Aldrich, Paul Costello (facilitator), Alex DePillis, Greg Gerdel, Michelle McCutcheon-Schour, Jenny Nelson, Chris Recchia, Andrew Savage, John Sayles, Misty Sinsigalli (scribe), Lars Torres

What are the Assets in this Area?

- We are fortunate to have the Athenaeum, Fairbanks, Catamount Arts, Kingdom County Productions. These are big organizations that set us apart from other towns.
- Our Town's Accessibility. We are the epicenter of the NEK.
- Maple Grove Farms.
- The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail starts here!
- The architecture gives us a sense of place. We are passionate about the area.
- The St. Johnsbury Band and North Country Chorus are assets.
- There are recreational facilities within close distance of the town such as Burke Mountain, Kingdom Trails, and the St. Johnsbury Country Club.
- We have Rural Community Transit for a segment of the population. RCT will do special trips and the Route 2 commuter is wonderful for commuters. The commuter and in town service are full every day. Volunteer drivers coordinate with meal sites, commodity and farm programs so people have access to the farmers market.
- There is service from Lyndonville to St. J and back. Housing projects, human services, hospitals, are all on Route 5.
- All our daily needs can be met within a 30 minute drive.
- Access to the rail line is a plus from a shipping perspective.
- The Park and Ride is great for commuters.
- The railroad is a part of the Cultural Heritage. These assets could be leveraged in the future.
- We have a working rail yard with turn table that serves a lot of lumber yards from the north.
- Passumpsic Pier is a great spot and would be nice to develop.
- We have a beautiful welcome center.
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail.
- We are the Gateway from the south into the NEK and a junction where 93 and 91 meet. We also have proximity to the White Mountains – all of which make for a great destination getaway.
- We have a CT river byways designation.
- There is an Electric Car charging station.

What are the Challenges?

- Inner city connectivity. There is no bus route from NEK to Boston or Littleton.
- The Route 2 commuter bus needs more hours during the day so college students can use them to other CCV locations.
- Pedestrian walkways and sidewalks need improvements and there are no bike lanes north of town.
- The Rail trail is only partially open. It would be great to have it complete.
- Access to capital is a big challenge.
- There needs to be better bus service with more frequent stops.
- Parking Meters at the municipal parking lots need to be more user friendly. Business owners or others park all day and just move cars so it takes away from shoppers being able to park.
- There is an over emphasis on accommodating tourists to the detriment of residents.
- Charging stations for cars need to be more accessible and more affordable.
- All cars on 93 are directed to 89 to get to Vermont versus telling them they can get to Vermont by following 93 North. There needs to be better signage.
- Better signage is needed in general. From the center out of town there isn't any.
- The low income housing right downtown detracts from businesses. There is a lot of blight and the buildings look neglected. The owners may be absent. No organized effort appears to have been put together to do something about this.
- Passenger rail service would be a great thing to have.
- Bus tours into St. Johnsbury are good but once we get them in we can't service them because restaurants and accommodations are lacking.
- We need a single gateway into the community rather than several different ways. Signage could direct them to one gateway.

- The prison presents a challenge because families migrate when members are in prison and community services are taxed.
- No turn by turn phone app is available for the area.
- The riverfront is unused and not accessible. We should look at property rights/easements to gain access to the property so that it can be developed.
- Many different programs are offered by many different agencies and organizations. We need to come together as one with no duplication of services.
- We need to establish an identity like Jay Peak or Burke. We need to be clear about why people should come into town.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Brand St. Johnsbury as the gateway of the NEK and funnel all of the tourist traffic through St. Johnsbury.
- We should develop the riverfront into a public space. It is a beautiful asset. NVDA has developed three different plans as to what to do with the river, but something gets in the way. We could get the land and put in a park or bike path. We need to start small and have a vision and realize that its 10-15 years down the road. We need to work with private property or railroad property owners.
- Develop an outdoor venue for performances with parking and space for 1500-2000 people.
- Create recreational trail use in the town forest. The maps are not accurate and need to be updated more frequently.
- Continue the three rivers bike trail into downtown. We have received a grant but any other help would be appreciated. The route 5 corridor looks to be way to get this done.
- Create an organized group for bikers.
- Mobilize federal regulations for signage. NVDA has reached out with VTrans and done some research but there seems to be a hang-up. Form a group to get signage changed.
- Change packaging for marketing to draw Canadians. Translate signs into French and draw tourism from the north.
- Develop more overnight accommodations.
- Meters are a deterrent. There needs to be a consensus between businesses and residents on meters and how to deal with them.
- Develop different events to draw tourists. Advertise that the St. Johnsbury band plays every week, Caledonia farmers market on Saturdays, Kingdom County Productions. We can do a better job selling attractions here in town.
- Collaborate marketing between organizations and businesses in town.
- Look at the Mall and how this space can be used to benefit the town.
- Create a collective effort to move tourism forward. There are too many stake holders and no organization for all of them to come together as one force.
- Identify groups that the Academy can bring in that can help businesses.
- We need a town website that is maintained and kept up to date. One place where people can go to get information.
- Redevelop depot square.
- Three years ago the Selectboard rewrote town ordinances but the town has yet to enforce those new ordinances. They need to do this and this may help.
- Decentralize social service agencies out of downtown.
- The Park and Ride is an eyesore lighting and paving to be redone.
- Capitalize on the asset of the railroad. Improve it and it could be a draw to tourists.
- Extend VAST into town
- Plan a large canoe or kayak event to bring people in. Use the river as draw to the area.
- Provide evening buses for people who want to go to events. Offer more trips for college students who go to school in Montpelier, Lyndon, and other areas.
- Bring people together to enhance pride in their town.
- Use the Civil War history and rich heritage of St. J as a tourist attraction.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- It is important to think about branding.
- The community can work together to deal with issues in the downtown ie; depot square, signage, metering issue, VAST spots.
- Think about the connectivity of bike trails, the town forest, the waterfront, bike lanes, bike paths, etc.
- There are many local history and culture assets, but they are underutilized. Think about celebrating the local history and culture.
- How can you make the railroad an asset? It is a cultural touchstone but also a barrier.
- Think about a regional focus on marketing and signage. Groups don't always talk to each other and there needs to be more collaboration and consensus. No one can move forward unless they get everyone together
- Every small community runs into challenges accessing capital. It's important to think about how you can overcome that.
- We heard some about the dilemma of social service downtown – maybe this could be looked at as more of an asset than a challenge.
- VT College of Fine Arts might be good people to talk to about signage as they worked hard to get good signage as people come off the highway.
- You could revitalize specific parts of downtown core. St. J's downtown is a designated downtown area. How do we bring in capital using this designation?
- You could take cues from others about how they have marketed their byway by integrating assets and thinking about how you can map them for tourists.
- Lamoille Country Rail Trail – connectivity!
- Collaboration and new leadership are an opportunity!
- A website is a good way to pull in people and accuracy is critical.
- Van pools, car pools can offer connectivity through transportation.
- More organized group around biking or walking might pull people into downtown.
- Facebook, twitter, and local students can help brand the town with resources available.
- It's a great idea to expand charging stations in the town.

- It is important to involve everyone in this process and not a single group.
- Think about Land Use. How are we going to use the land. Consider Mixed Use. Connectivity is the opportunity.
- Find the institutional pillars.

Building Strong Neighborhoods

Resource Team: Will Belongia, Ted Brady, Mike Fife, Sara Gilbert, Shaun Gilpin, Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup (facilitator), Kathleen Kanz, Margaret Gibson McCoy (scribe), Alex MacLean, Nancy Owens, Tim Volk

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Stunningly beautiful here and we're at the intersection of 2 interstates.
- Historic heritage.
- Abundant recreational opportunities: skiing, mountain biking, hiking.
- St J Academy brought me here.
- Thriving arts community thanks to Catamount Arts.
- Great small businesses.
- Fairbanks Museum.
- Caring community, generosity of the people here.
- We have a thriving downtown district.
- Beautiful architecture.
- St Johnsbury town forest.
- Town of great philanthropic assets.
- Really good local banking and financial institutions.
- The Restorative Justice Center is a great asset.
- The Kingdom recovery center has a strong recovering community.
- Art gallery at the Athenaeum has magnificent pieces of art.
- The Athenaeum is newly restored with a skylight.
- It's a walkable and bikable community – it's safe to walk.
- The police and fire departments are friendly, and fast to respond.
- Police patrol the area; they are on task.
- The collaboration between police, probation, and others is really great.
- Lamoille Valley Rail Trail will connect from St. J to Swanton. The bike path from St. J to Danville is open now. It's an important asset to St. J now and in the future.
- A great local hospital.
 - The public school is great.
 - We have a Farmers market.
 - The Coop.
- Neighborhood groups have potlucks, and coordinate projects like cleaning the Arlington woods area, for example.
- Diverse neighborhoods.
- Diversity that the Academy brings to our rural area; we see people from all different countries and cultures on daily basis.
- Easy access to services, like mental health. Communication between agencies is amazing. Collaborations with agencies in close proximity makes it easy. It's intentional communication.
- People look out for each other.
- Small town connections makes it feel like I'm in a caring atmosphere. If fall down on the street, someone comes and picks me up.
- Transportation of city busses helps people.
- There are community meals at churches 6 days of the week.
- The Mustard Seed Soup Kitchen.
- People are motivated and have momentum for positive change. People are thinking about how to make St. J better and more livable.
- The freshman capstone program at the Academy is great. They have to create projects with or for cultural institutions in town; they work on projects for Fairbanks, the Athenaeum. It helps them connect to the community.

What are the Challenges?

- Not many emergency beds in the hospital. Emergency response is a big ball of wax.
- Need for homeless shelter is huge. A new documentary called "Frozen and Alone" is being produced about homelessness in St J. There are so many homeless families, kids, people in St. J. Elm Street shut down which left a hole. We tried to open a warming center but it's hard.
- Lack of quality affordable housing.
- Lack of quality market rate housing.
- Chainsaws are cutting the maple trees down on north part of Main Street. I don't know why – we need trees for shade.
- Property taxes are too high; most people are happy to pay their fair share, but when there's an inequity with what you put in with what you get out, it creates resentment.
- Drug addiction leads to loitering, crime.
- Poverty and lack of opportunity for young people to stay here.
- Lack of livable wage jobs. Young people have to leave to find a career and make a living.
- I always see lots of jobs offered in the newspaper, but they are jobs that the kids are not qualified for.
- Mismatch of skills that kids have when they leave high school with the jobs that are available. Channeling kids to college with no thought about whether it's right for them.
- Job fair is coming up on the 18th at the St. J school.

- Kids aren't prepared for school when they enter Kindergarten. School is taking excellent steps in dealing with it, but it does impact our schools. Teachers have to deal with social issues rather than just educational.
- St J was just named as a Promise Community moving to solutions toward that issue. With funds and resources.
- Being next door to tax-free New Hampshire can be a challenge.
- Keeping the streets clean, especially down by the water is a challenge.
- Old mattresses, burned out TV's, left on end of republican block. Pete Greens is moving in there; hopefully that will help.
- Crude stuff sometimes goes on in the town forest.
- Crumbling infrastructure, can't walk on the sidewalks in neighborhoods. Paving of main streets has recently been done, but not in the neighborhoods.
- Empty storefronts.
- Very transient population; seeing people on my street that I don't recognize impacts the way my neighborhood gets along and works together. It makes me afraid to let my children stay outside to play without keeping an eye on them.
- We have housing for parolees, which is fine, but when the weather gets good and they are on porches, their language is crude, loud, rough. How to raise children with that around? There has to be a way to communicate to those that use offending language so they can see how it affects the local families. Creates a behavioral conflict to attract people into the neighborhood.
- It has an impact on the commercial district too. Loitering, language, is quite bad. Impacts those that visit St. J and can leave them with a bad impression of the downtown.
- Noise pollution. Lots of constant machinery noise which makes it hard to enjoy a summer's day and silly things like birds (at the exact moment, the bird clock in the Fairbanks gift shop started to chirp three o'clock, making everyone laugh).
- Reckless attitude regarding care of dogs. People don't think anything of letting dogs bark at 6am, and so much dog poop around. I love dogs, but the attitude is reckless. Dog poop everywhere, in neighborhoods.
- People's attitudes that senior are just a challenge. Seniors provide a lot of free labor, they have skills and experience the town can take advantage of.
- The tone of the local newspaper is a challenge. It could be such an asset to the community.
- The transient makeup of the community. Seems to be overwhelming proportion of people moving to St. J for high school, or they tuition their kids in. I would like to see people move here for the community and stay long-term.
- There are 2 transient populations: those who are underemployed or here for services, and those that come just for the schooling. 2 classes of people.
- We're a prison town. We have a humongous opiate addiction problem. Kids don't have the money or family support system to get them out of this town. The prison is great and creates opportunities.
- Opiate problem is all over Vermont, big and small towns.
- We have a jail here, a court system, probation, services they need to access like therapy, training, etc. They have to remain in the area until they complete their requirements. There isn't any parole housing downtown. It's perceived that we're bringing a certain population to the area because of it. That population exists and does pose a challenge to the community. Police patrol the area really well, they are on task.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- There is a lot of momentum and excitement in this town, and a good amount of private investment in the area. More people and private enterprises need to take chances. Projects can be leveraged successfully. The barriers to entry to investing into this town aren't that high. It's exciting.
- Some people feel that St J shoulders more than its share of the burden of services to people getting out of prison. Decentralizing that system would be a way to share the burden and lift the concentration.
- The system works against us. When you are paroled, you have to stay within a certain area to be near your parole officer. They have to stay here by stipulation for access to a concentration of services that are related to the prison.
- Incredible amount of misinformation about the role of the jail and the work camp and about people being imported here. The superintendent of the jail and manager of probation parole should hold a series of community forums around the topic, so people know with numbers instead of just going on their fears. The prisoners do a lot for the town. Give them some credit for what they are doing well; give them some leeway. We have a population that commits crime. The work camp gives back to the community; they cut firewood for people, mows lawns.
- We could get folks that come here for the schools involved with folks that are here for services.
- We used to have the Dismus House where half the residents were those getting out of jail and the other half college students. But it takes a lot of organization and planning for it to work.
- 670 people in town use the methadone program for treatment. It would be better for them to go outside of town for treatment than bring them into town. The facility has moved (or is moving) so it found its own solution.
- Organize more fairs in St. Johnsbury; maybe a young people's festival, or one for parolees that displays their wonderful talents. Some agencies in our town have a big draw anytime St Johnsbury puts on a fair. People from all over come, it's a festive attitude. A premium way to cross boundaries.
- This Saturday is "Fun Fest" for ages 13 and under.
- So many agencies are here in this meeting. It's kind of like an agency mentality. We need more entrepreneurs. People who

aren't looking to agencies for solutions but those that want to shoulder responsibility.

- The young professional community has grown and they are involved in the community in a positive way. The Kingdom Tap Room was created about a year ago by 8 couples as a place for people to gather at night. It's getting a positive response. Have more places in the downtown for people to go where they feel safe to spend time in community.
- The Foundry is a major space that meets in Catamount; like a maker space. There's a great opportunity there for people that want to create things or come together to innovate.
- Incorporate the arts into our neighborhoods more. Collaborate with Catamount Arts. Great community to involve the arts more in our neighborhoods because of Catamount Arts.
- Create more opportunities for people to connect with the community, like the Freshman Capstone Program at the St. J Academy.
- Seems to be a feeling that the arts are an elitist group and superfluous. We need to break down this barrier of stereotypes. See the stereotypes reflected in the Caledonian. For example, an article that said "even Catamount Arts passed this year". People need to recognize that humanities transforms lives of inmates. They have to see themselves as part of humanity and community. Includes history, knowledge of community, of people, what makes them a human being.
- Want broad accessibility to events at Catamount Arts. Sometimes a feeling from those folks that they don't belong there. They don't know how to attend events there because they never have; they don't know how it works, what to wear, etc.
- Create a mentorship program or buddy program that is mutually beneficial. Pair someone who is into the arts with someone that has no experience with the arts to do artful things together. Then the non-art experienced person shares something they know, so it's mutually beneficial.
- Bring back the neighborhood organizations. The "Four Seasons" neighborhood groups would meet twice a month with dinners. It ran for 7 or 8 years and included 400 houses. Law enforcement would come talk to them. They became less attended so it fell off. If we diversified the timeframe it could be instituted again. Delivered a newsletter once a month. 5 people would visit all 400 houses at times. There was regular attendance of 20-30 people. We found that we could talk with town officials and get better results as a group than if we went

as individuals. 20 people have more clout than just one. But it takes individuals of certain attitude, energy, and enthusiasm to make it work.

- Institute the old welcome wagon idea. Neighbors inviting new neighbors to the potluck that used to happen. Individually welcome new folks by bringing food, etc.
- Need to address the dog poop situation and act as a community and have each other's backs. We could do an education campaign around why it's important to clean up after your dogs. Dog poop is unhealthy, it pollutes water, makes it unsafe for kids to go outside to play. We could put up more kiosks for folks to put their dog packages in. Talk with the town dog catcher for ideas to the solution.
- Would be great for more neighborhood watch programs to start up again. For it to work, it needs support of neighbors that live there that know the comings and goings. By having meetings, the police can bring services into the neighborhoods. Justice Center can help mediate issues once the meetings are in place. They can name the issues, and reach out and ask for solutions. Community of Restorative Justice Center will help any neighborhood group that wants to start up.
- At the Tap Room decided to do an outdoor patio on railroad Street for dining. People thought it was crazy to do that right next to the Depot Street apartments. It can be a problem, but people are genuinely polite. When people are sitting there, you see fewer incidents of people swearing. People eventually come around and behave in a responsible manner. If people are out there using the streets and co-mingling, it helps model how to behave. Maybe some leadership at Depot Square to partner. The Depot Square Neighborhood Association is opening a food shelf there. If there are challenges between residents and others, they may be able to help.
- Having more people show up to positive community events. People have to get behind each other and support the positive things that are going on. Seems like attendance is really low.
- Would like to see Arnold Park Association get up and running again.
- Look at ways to reduce cost of housing for people. It's such a large part of outflow of people's resources. If you bring down housing costs, co-housing, people don't have to much so much and have time to volunteer. Give people more time to volunteer and participate in activities.
- Fall 2014 article in Vermont Life magazine shows 2 sides of St. J.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- 56% of renters are spending more than 33% of their income on housing. Sounded like 2 communities discussed today. Strong assets, but then heard a lot of contradictions in the challenges area. How to integrate the 2 communities seems like the challenge ahead. Some good ideas today around arts and volunteerism.
- Big rural problems. St J is the County Seat. It's all happening here, the good and bad. Heard a call for the larger population

that cares about the entire population to engage. Things have lapsed that used to happen, like neighborhood groups and potlucks. Heard people want more volunteerism, more neighborhood cohesion. Everyone in this town is good by nature and it's up to everyone in town to bring it out. Will have big rural opportunities and big rural problems as a result.

- Reclaim the space. Have physical assets, beautiful area, positive human aspects, agencies, some of the intriguing

solutions had to do with reclaiming a community sensibility about all those values.

- Have a community in a great location economically, transportation, with desirable arts scene and recreation, and a lot of pride. Lots of assets. Seems to be a core group with pride that wants to collaborate and reach out to the more transient population to invite them to feel included.
- Have a cool community here. A great place. A long list of assets. The notion of entrepreneurs, people with great ideas, energy and capital, could address with that energy. And money that comes from it, good wages, etc.
- A lot of assets can be leveraged to address some of the challenges. Strong art community, tremendous infrastructure

within the arts with that entrepreneurial history and spirit. Maker space and foundry are starting up. Have a great opportunity. Exposure to the humanities feeding an entrepreneurial mindset can start impacting some of those neighborhoods that need stronger link to the community in order to benefit.

- Land conservation, housing, came up. Heard that you want a voice in shaping these challenges into assets. VT Housing Conservation Board would be interested in helping.
- Mentoring and connection with arts access. You could do a program like “Photo Voice” that invites professional photographers to the street to take pictures of people telling their story and hanging the pictures across town.

Seniors

Resource Team: Jenna Banning (scribe), Susan Elliot, Jeff Francis, Eddie Gale, Michael Moser, Jill Remick, Lisa Viles, Susan Wehry (facilitator), Jenna Whitson

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Seniors are assets themselves; it’s good that St. Johnsbury has them, and it’s good that they’re in St. Johnsbury.
- The cultural opportunities that exist and/or come to St. Johnsbury on a regular basis, such as the Catamounts Art Center, the Fairbanks Museum, the Academy, Lyndon State College, and the Senior Center, are all assets.
- Lyndon State College offers free and discounted courses for seniors.
- The Good Living Senior Center is the only senior center in the city and a great resource. However, it was described as an “underutilized gem;” due to its location in the St. Jay House, one of the senior housing buildings, there is the perception that it is only open to the residents of that building, while it is actually open Monday - Thursday for everyone 50+ in the community. The Senior Center sends out approximately 400 letters every month to the surrounding area, but there is still very low turnout in activities. Currently, 40 people is considered a “good” attendance, but they’d like to see more people come.
- There is a Dialysis Center and Cancer Treatment Center available in the center.
- Meals on Wheels (described by one person as “perfect”) and the Senior Meal Site are open to everyone and good resources.
- It’s good that all of the cultural activities and sites are within walking distance from each other. The city’s new sidewalk plow has been very helpful with this during the winter. The fact that St. Johnsbury’s Main Street offers so many great opportunities is an asset, and unique to this city.
- The Town Van offers transportation. St. Johnsbury is lucky to have Rural Community Transportation (RCT).
- There is a wonderful hospital in the area. The region’s traveling nurses and hospice are a huge part of this community; they are trained well and come into the homes of their clients.
- The Agency of Aging is a wonderful asset. It helped one attendee of this session with the insurance component of moving to the area, and helps provide access to programs. For example, the Agency of Aging offers tai chi and other exercise classes.
- Support and Services at Home (SASH) is a good organization that helps people remain in their homes as they age. It provides medicine support, wellness trainings, a wellness nurse that visits people in their homes, and encourages people to participate in healthy living workshops.
- The Police Department interacts with a lot of senior citizens through SASH and other meetings. The PD likes to interact with these senior groups, and if they’re not present at a meeting, it’s because they don’t know about it yet.
- The Academy took over the Recreation Department and the Recreation Facility. It’s recognized that it’s necessary to provide programming for elderly people, and it’s good to have an opportunity to use the Rec facility in the middle of the town.
- The Osher Family programming is an asset. It provides opportunities for mental activities, and supports life-long learning, such as college type programming for seniors (without any homework).
- There are lectures offered in the Athenaeum on first Wednesdays.

What are the Challenges?

- Negative thinking and perceptions about St. Johnsbury has affected the schools, and the community needs to change this way of thinking.
- Cost is a factor with accessing resources for many seniors.
- The community should be accepting of people with hearing impairments. One of the participants in this session was hearing impaired, but we were fortunate that a community member who knows American Sign Language was also in attendance and could translate.
- There is a lack of financial aid for glasses, teeth, and hearing aids.
- St. Johnsbury is “smothered in services,” with every state agency having a presence in the area.
- Four couples have moved away from town because there isn’t any extended care available for people, especially couples, and limited opportunities for aging in place or aging in an assisted care facility.
- There needs to be more housing for seniors, both independent housing and assisted housing: affordable, available, and possibly multi-generational, although there was a disagreement on the age that residents should be (55+, or younger.)
- St. J House starts at 55, but all 5 senior centers have different rules for how to get in. These differences were also viewed as a problem, and participants would like to see more standardized requirements to decrease the amount of confusion experienced by participants in this session.
- There is an increasing number of seniors who don’t want to or unable to take care of their homes anymore.
- There is a concern that “affordable” housing is a subjective term, and that many seniors are being shut out of access to housing and other resources because they have “a little too much.” There is a lot of subsidized housing in the area, but nothing available for unsubsidized, and participants want some senior housing that is not income-restricted.
- A study by the St. Johnsbury Chamber of Commerce and UVM Extension found that there is not enough senior housing.
- The senior houses are full, and there’s a need for “another Colonial, or even two,” which would be easily filled.
- A lot of housing is taken up by people with disabilities, which makes housing very competitive. Rents in St. Johnsbury are commensurate with Williston, but there’s not the economic base in the area to warrant such high rent.
- Animals, which are important parts of people’s lives, are allowed in some places but not others.
- Senior housing centers don’t have composting, but this is going to be a requirement soon, and one participant would like to know what’s being done in regards to this.
- There is very limited public transportation to outside of St. Johnsbury.
- With the area’s harsh winters, it’s hard to be housebound, and the community needs to get people out of their homes.
- Seniors are concerned about going out at night because of drug issues, the prison in town, and the lack of transportation. Since the shuttle stops at 7:30, they are worried about how to get out and back safely.
- The clientele on Railroad Street are safety issues and deter people from visiting that area.
- Snowy banks and sidewalks are not taken care of in a timely manner during the winter, which makes it harder for seniors to park and get to places.
- St. Johnsbury has great facilities, such as the Academy and the School, and people should go see what the kids in town are doing and support the future generation.
- St. Johnsbury needs more enterprises or companies for seniors to purchase everyday needs (like a ball of yarn) that people currently have to leave town to find. Town planners should consider promoting a bank, grocery store, or drug store on the Main Street level. There is a grocery store and drug store in the area that will deliver, but some people are challenged accessing this technology.
- This is a hilly area with no flat developable land. Most of the flat areas are already developed, and developers would need to knock down existing buildings, or start building on areas that are too far outside of the town center.
- There are very few places with flat areas, which makes it harder for people to get around, in terms of both parking and walkability.
- There needs to be increased communication and education to make people aware of what’s going on in town. There was a discussion in the session over who should coordinate this communication. There are a lot of different entities working on the same issues, possibly in different ways, and people need to know about them.
- The Rec Department has opened a website - RecFitStJ.org - to make people aware of what activities or organizations are going on and available. It is free for different groups to post on this website. The director would like know how seniors would like to be identified for programming - as “seniors,” “adults,” or “multi-generational”? Participants stated they would like to see more inter-generational programming, such as allowing seniors to help mentor young families and building bridges between the generations.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- The community needs to have data to know how many people are being affected by issues and what are their needs.
- Get developers interested in the area, especially for a senior housing project. However, to get developers, the market

needs to be solidified so developers know what's in St. Johnsbury and see that they can make money.

- Pete's Greens just bought the Republican Block. Although participants don't know what their plans are, they see this as an opportunity.
- There is a Conference Space coming to Main Street, which will include subsidized housing, although no affordable housing for people with assets.
- Cover Home Repair, an organization in White River Junction, helps people to do basic home repairs, and could be duplicated in St. Johnsbury. Habitat for Humanity is in the area, but has a long waiting list and an income test to build new homes. The Agency on Aging has volunteers to go into homes and fix things.
- The Academy has a program to help fix vehicles.
- There needs to be increased communication and education. We could develop outreach materials / visuals with problems

listed on the left side of the paper and resources to deal with those issues on the right, and to put these materials in highly trafficked areas.

- The School has started a section in the newspaper. The paper could be used to let people know what's going on.
- There is an increasing senior presence on Facebook - this could be another venue for communication in addition to printed materials.
- St. Johnsbury could leverage some federal funding for the creation and development of a website for communication. The community could get volunteers to help seniors learn how to access the internet and the communications website.
- Front Porch Forum, an online neighborhood bulletin board used to post needs, things for sale, and news alerts, has grown very rapidly in the past 6 months. It's very easy to find and sign up for, and a possible great communications tool.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Liked the question about how "seniors" want to be identified and excited to know about these conversations because these same conversations are happening in other places, and there are programs that could work in St. Johnsbury, and wants to continue this dialogue and help to make the connections. The themes of this session were that "Knowledge is power," Front Porch Forum, and transportation.
- Impressed with the energy of the participants and their commitment to making St. Johnsbury a better community.
- What was impressive about this meeting was that the participants did a really good job expressing what they saw as challenges and what could be done to address those challenges. You should have a lot of hope about what they see and what they can do about the issues. As the process evolves, more concrete forms of actions will be developed. I'm impressed by your ability to express your concerns and opportunities and your wisdom.
- I am excited to hear about how people are already taking advantage of everything that St. Johnsbury already has, and believe that St. Johnsbury has the potential to become a destination place for people. There's great opportunity to develop housing that adjusts with age and that is affordable. Since there's a lot of infrastructure already, St. Johnsbury could capitalize on its potential to become a place for seniors.
- The issues that came up in this session are the same that have been coming up in different meetings in which we've been involved, and that these are "community" issues, not just "senior" issues. These include housing, safety and fear of walking in the streets.
- Issues like housing, transportation, and shopping are challenges for everyone. Think of where they get their information from, and let the team know about that list of communication resources.
- So honored to be a part of this process.

Energy Food and Land Use

Resource Team: John E. Adams, Alex Aldrich, Paul Costello (facilitator), Alex DePillis, Greg Gerdel, Michelle McCutcheon-Schour, Jenny Nelson, Chris Recchia, Andrew Savage, John Sayles, Misty Sinsigalli (scribe), Lars Torres

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The St. Johnsbury Farmers Market.
- The St. Johnsbury Food Coop.
- There are community meals 6 days a week at Kingdom Community Services.
- The Town Forest is an asset.
- There are a growing number of food producers in the area.
- The Academy's culinary program.
- The local hospital – NVRH.
- There are at least two community gardens in St. J.
- The architecture in town is an asset.
- Energy information is available on houses and other residences if needed.
- There is good demand for high quality food.
- We have great walking trails.
- The Forest, Parks, and Recreation department has an office right in town.
- We have ample capability for renewables including hydro, wind and solar.
- There are three rivers.
- We have a weatherization program.

- We still have active dairy farms that are willing to keep their land open and available.
- Arlington Woods is adjacent to the town forest.
- One or two springs are available.
- Lamoille Valley Rail Trail is being upgraded and extended.
- There is an active town energy committee that has five members.
- Sun Common is about to do a big launch in town.
- Hydropower at the Fairbanks mill.
- Pellet heating. Pellets are coming from New Hampshire, they but could be localized.

What are the Challenges?

- The price of energy is high for employers with large numbers of employees who use large amounts of electricity.
- There is no walkable grocery store in the downtown.
- There doesn't seem to be any solar solutions in town.
- We have a short growing season.
- Older homes are very inefficient energy wise.
- Arlington woods and the town forest have invasive species that take away usable space.
- There are challenges connecting new farmers with new land or current farmers who want to expand their current operation.
- The town has not been good about keeping viable agriculture in the town.
- There are several large empty buildings in town taking up a lot of space that could be used for other uses such as a Coop or year round farmers market.
- There is a lack of food opportunity such as coops.
- Energy and food solutions are not affordable for the majority of residents.
- We need to bring back backyard gardens.
- We need a more substantial year round farmers market.
- There are a lot of hungry people – kids especially!
- We don't have one resource that citizens can go to for information.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Create a public food forest of a polyculture of edible bushes and trees.
- Identify ways to make the Farmers Market more affordable.
- Develop a community place where people can afford to shop that is accessible to people who don't have cars.
- Allow EBT cardholders to shop at the farmers market or coop where they can get fresh food at a lower cost.
- Keep food spending local.
- Look into solar as a community. Most solar providers now will provide 5-10% savings just for going solar.
- Identify ways to save on heating oil and transportation. We are spending money for out of state resources.
- Local sourcing: heating with wood at institutions, local home solar, local homes heating with wood.
- District heating for downtown heating (Montpelier just did this).
- Continuous access to natural gas.
- Develop educational opportunities to educate adults on energy for the home. Give them the alternatives to their current systems and incorporate local companies.
- Move the St. Johnsbury Food Coop into downtown.
- Develop community organizations that can shepherd these ideas forward for food.
- Exempt certain solar or energy improvements so taxes won't go up.
- Bolster support of the energy committee.
- The Energy committee could team up with the recreation department to offer an educational opportunity. Perhaps a summer camp on energy and food.
- Climate change is elephant in the room. Develop transition planning around food, energy, and land use. Organize a transition group.
- Include transition planning in the Town Plan which is revised every 5 years.
- Put a program in place at the school to bring agricultural program that would allow them to learn and grow produce and possibly bring home.
- Work with St. Johnsbury Academy students to develop Capstone projects to educate older adults or the community at large.
- Hold the NVDA energy fair in St. Johnsbury instead of Lyndon.
- Create a year round covered farmer's market. Minimal heat is needed.
- Build another wing of the St. Johnsbury Coop to be used for commercial kitchen space for the community.
- We should use current resources that we have in town instead of building new ones – like kitchens in churches.
- Microgrids can be hooked into solar, cars, alternative energy. Makes the grid much smaller and makes the community more independent
- We need multi-stall public toilets behind ball fields for an emergency toilet for the town of St. Johnsbury.
- Develop front yards as a vegetable garden to grow your own vegetables.
- Build a composting facility for residents.
- Look at the school calendar and think about energy usage in regards to that service: Colorado does 4 days a week schooling.
- Encourage St. J's select board to join NEK Waste Management and have a privately owned waste management facility.
- Get the arts community incorporated into all of these ideas.
- Put solar panel on each roof in town or build green roofs.
- Create car share pools for people who can't access grocery stores or other shopping outside of town.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Local food, low cost.
- Organize groups to take on these initiatives.
- Education is important to improve the energy literacy of the community.
- Develop gardens in the community.
- Pull groups together. You may not realize what you have in your community as resources.
- There are a lot of organizations out there that could provide support, as well as businesses such as Localvore.
- It sounds like there is a significant need to bring food access to the downtown.
- Look for makers and who is supplying raw materials.
- Develop data so you have information available so you know where you need to go.
- Local resources are important. Use local first.
- Set a goal of energy savings.
- Look to examples from other communities such as; Strolling of the Heifers (community kitchens Brattleboro), Burke Town School (pellet boiler), Brattleboro Food Coop (commercial/coop/ residential – mixed use building).
- VECAN VT Energy Community Action Network can help with the development of and support for the energy committee.
- Get younger people onto these committees.
- Develop data to know what you are using for energy.
- It is important to unite leadership for a common voice and common message.

Image and Identify of St. Johnsbury

Resource Team: Will Belongia, Ted Brady (facilitator), Mike Fife (scribe), Sara Gilbert, Shaun Gilpin, Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup, Kathleen Kanz, Alex MacLean, Nancy Owens, Tim Volk

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Civic and Residential historic architecture.
- We have many great cultural institutions such as The Academy, Catamount Arts, and Dog Mountain.
- There are many different kids from different cultures that come to the Academy.
- The Fairbanks Museum.
- St Johnsbury's natural beauty is an asset.
- We have many recreational opportunities such as the Rec Trail, river front, farmers market, and Dog Mountain.
- We are located at a crossroads of 3 major highways.
- We have Local shops and businesses.
- There are opportunities for health and wellness such as medical facilities, good areas for running, cycling and skiing.
- People have a sense of community. Everyone knows someone and there are constant good feelings.
- Hospital, doctors, trees... there is lots of everything!
- There are parks and places for children to play and gather.
- Strong history and a sense of place.
- We have railroads and would love to see more done with it.
- We have a diverse economy, good manufacturers and industrial park, arts economy and agricultural economy.
- We have a diverse population.
- Those native to here as well as folks who moved here because they love it understand why it's so special.
- The education level and diversity of education of those people.
- We have beautiful churches. This is especially good for tourism.
- The Maple Grove Museum.
- We have an asset in the older mature trees in town.

What are the Challenges?

- Downtown Challenges:
 - Loitering and fights at the Depot Square building discourages tourism.
 - Many empty store fronts.
 - Having to drive through Portland St as gateway to town.
 - There are drug problems.
 - Mismanaged properties.
- The Prison and all that goes with it.
- Creating an image for our neighboring communities and changing their image of St J. Our image isn't necessarily negative but it's not positive.
- There are too many social programs that drag the community down.
- Drug issues –
 - Folks are dealing out of their house/parking lot by homes.
 - A needle was stuck in home wall.
 - There is dealing at playgrounds.
- Youth need an identity and reason to stay in the area.
- Youth feel hopeless and rely on drugs.
- Many different brands that have accumulated so that it is unclear what our image is. We need a few rallying points that we can broadcast out.
- Many Identities include:
 - Manufacturing
 - Agriculture
 - Recreation
 - Arts and Culture
 - School

- Dysfunction
 - Retail mecca (though this changed with the growth of retail in Littleton NH).
 - Travel Destination or Basecamp for folks visiting the area?
- We are not seen as a place to live. Any branding should include this.
- People say one things but then don't follow through and thus authority is not respected.
- There is a mix of less fortunate incomes as well as more fortunate but the Perception is that this is a poor community and there isn't a lot to offer other than nature.
- St J sometimes has an identity problem seeing itself as "poor poor pitiful me."
- Many who live here don't realize what we have in the community.
- St J sometimes gets left out of the statewide discussion.
- St J is missed in the news media.
- St J is not seen as terrific in Montpelier.
- Information is not disseminated statewide.
- It is a challenge to get people of means or moderate means to choose to buy a house in St. J. Folks choose to live in a more secluded area because that's safer.
- It was a big loss when mature trees and sidewalks were taken out to make room for power lines.
- There are not a lot of places to just hang out.
- There are no family style restaurants or department stores, and this makes it less desirable to visit.
- There is a problem getting information out. The gallery is wonderful. A historic site trail, a great film.
- Loss of neighborhood schools. Consolidation and closure of schools has meant that ownership of schools has not been taken up by the community.
 - Folks don't see the building.
 - Folks don't see what's being done by students.
 - Kids from the town also don't feel like the academy is theirs (there were objections to this comment) K-8 school is still not associated with the town though.
 - Folks used to come to school for concerts etc... but now they don't show up as much.
- 15 Years ago there was a fire and recessions and now there is not as robust a retail community.
- Folks used to come from Burlington just to see the retail spaces.
- Littleton competes with retail in St J. Walmart came in and folks are mad and shop at Walmart instead of locally in retaliation for not getting Walmart here.
- We need a vision.
- Housing is expensive for young middle class families.
- Heat is expensive.
- Old houses take upkeep.
- The Caledonia Record doesn't print a lot of positive news.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Local schools can be community centers.
- Better job of code enforcement.
- Force property owners to get things up to code and put \$ into properties.
- Encourage people to invest money in businesses to get them over their paralysis due to the challenges listed.
- Find a way for property owners to rent to folks who have business that build community rather than anyone that can pay the rent.
- We need to make downtown feel safer.
 - More police presence may help folks feel safer which would lead to more investment.
 - Blue light system might help as well.
- Market "discover St J."
- Change the internal mentality of residents.
- Establish a vision for 5 years, 10 years, 20 years.
 - Brand will follow vision.
 - Without a vision making progress will be very hard
 - Once this is done the vision must be incentivized
- Tap into middle and high schools.
 - Poetry and arts displays.
 - Use these to create community.
 - Use these also to get people downtown and shopping.
 - Recently outside communities came to some of these.
- Need ways to take advantage of programs to winterize homes
 - If over income it's much harder to do.
 - Challenging for 36 year old and friends.
 - Have a home improvement day.
 - Have a tax free home improvement products day.
- Move the Caledonia Record to be more positive.
- Make a film about the town to promote St J.
 - Chamber has done this – it's very well done!
 - Many here don't know about it.
- The Town can keep the website more up to date and informative of what's going on in town.
- Railroad to Maple Grove is a rough road.
 - It's being repaved.
 - Scheduled to be repaved as of yesterday (both Rt 2 and Rt 5).
- We have to get snow off the curbs in downtown so people can shop.
 - Can prisoners do this as work camp?
 - They do this already every few days
 - Should it be resident's responsibility to shovel walks?
- Develop an anchor destination in the historic New Avenue hotel which is now depot square such as a restaurant or department store.
- Clean up the Depot Street building.
 - Privately owned building.
 - Owner wants more than market value.
 - Can we buy the building even if we have to overpay?

- o If so maybe a place like Rural Edge could buy it and manage the property a little better.
- o The Town must enforce codes that are on the books in order to make the landlord keep building up and keep it nice.
- o What is the vision of what we want that building to be?
- o Why are we not dealing with the abuse of section 8 which could push out drug dealers etc....
- o Can we “shop for a big investor”?
- Folks come from afar to have car worked on because they found it on Facebook.
- Need a vision for the Republican Block and Whiskey den. This space was just sold to someone who will “do well for this community.”
- We must encourage development no matter what happens with Depot Square.
- We need to encourage people to take some chances and invest in non-depot square building.
- Can we form a community entity that could take manageable properties and so a “model” project?
 - o Start with a community investment approach.
 - o Can this be academy grads?
 - o Create investment pool within town?
- The Tap Room is an example. It is both a tap room and flexible office space.
- How do we promote the successes that are downtown?
 - o Chamber does some of this.
 - o Creating more central information center as well.
 - o Working with VT dept of tourism and marketing to promote successes in St J.
- Create an identity through a logo or some other visible “thing” that we can see.
- The Riverwalk is a great resource to develop that would then create a change in image. The River is an undeveloped resource.
- Signs leading into town are “hideous” and look like they were made in someone’s garage.
- Create new signs.
- Promote the town forest which is “stunning and beautiful.”
- Get the word out to the broader state about these meeting and what a great turnout of concerned citizens.
- We still need an improvement in the local newspaper and the local web... newspaper could help by promoting a happy healthy safe community.
- Start a competing newspaper.
- Only buy the paper when there are positive stories in it.
- Need to make sure to reach those without computers. Many of these folks are senior citizens
- Have law enforcement check on new people as they are coming in to town.
- Get rid of the monstrous Purina Building.
- The newspaper is actively looking for positive stories and so that’s what they report (also bad stories sell newspapers).
- Promote the river water which as a trophy trout water.
- Folks in town can talk more positively.
- St J has a great sense of community and we need to remember “why we’re here.”
- This is a good start, we may need more of this type of gathering.
- Clean up the gateways.
- The Park and Ride has been a project since 2007 and will come to be someday.
- Signage on major highways.
- Haves are myriad:
 - o Movies
 - o Art
 - o Academy
 - o Hospital
 - o Artisans Guild is state recognized craft center
- Town needs a new rebranding and marketing campaign.
- Signs and gateways are easy fixes.
- Talk the town up and be positive – this will help promote the town.
- Create a brand that includes all of the haves that were listed above.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There are lots of things to celebrate in this town and there are strong local identities in the town. Something has been lost with the closure of local schools.
- Inside out branding. You need to believe before others will believe. Ownership is the most powerful word that was used. today... community must own all of the streets, codes, schools, identity, communication, signs, own section 8 problems, crime problems, snow removal, etc...
- Many identities exist and how important it is to come to a unifying brand and identity that all can buy into. This will Change how people perceive you and how you perceive yourself
- Internal vs. external conversation – there were many positive remarks about your identity but there is a concern that others don’t see St J as residents do. The exception to this is with safety where internal and external views were both concerned.
- Internal perception is more fraught than the external perception. As a visitor I always looks forward to coming here. We heard a lot of talk about assets and that got buried in the challenges. I encourage you to grow your self-confidence.
- There are a ton of cultural assets and pride in institutions here. There is frustration that there has been a focus on recent negative history rather than long arc of positive history. VT does a lot of marketing for visitors but not a lot towards getting people to come here and stay.
- Everyone is expressing a desire to have an active role in changing the community for the better. Look at all these people who are motivated and willing.

- I encourage you to have a vision and create a vision of what you really want in your community. What would your ideal community look like? Have a visioning process.
- Make sure to show up to the follow up meeting and be part of the process that determines what we talk about and be part of the solution!

Education

Resource Team: Jenna Banning, Susan Elliot, Jeff Francis, Eddie Gale, Michael Moser, Jill Remick (facilitator), John Tracy, Lisa Viles, Susan Wehry, Jenna Whitson (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have dedicated and committed teachers both at the high school and the St. J school as well.
- The Early Education Collaborative shared hopes and dreams and worked hard to pull together to apply for Promise Community Grants from the state. St. J won a grant last week for a couple hundred thousand dollars to expand over a 4 year process to plan for what it is we envision and what we need in St J to get kids ready for school, get families support they need to succeed in school.
- We won a grant to purchase the support of a district-wide early education coordinator.
- Preschool expansion grant will offer a program for 4 year olds in local child care centers as part of grant to get support and technological support services and equipment, tuition, all from grant – pushing on a million bucks. Efforts have brought funding to an area that has tremendous need and a lot of community support.
- Town School, Academy, Cornerstone (2-12), Caledonia (9-12) School to address needs of students who are not succeeding in a traditional setting, Good shepherd school – private but does a great job.
- Class size and great teachers.
- We're fortunate to have the St. Johnsbury public school be such a nice facility. Renovations about 15 years ago created an outstanding facility with up to date features.
- There are great educational opportunities at Fairbanks, Athenaeum, and Catamount Arts. Many community education opportunities.
- There are a diversity of offerings between the schools and other community institutions and strong collaboration between these entities.
- The Recreation department offers engaging programs.
- There is a strong collaboration between the school and the Academy especially at Middle levels. There are Freshman math classes for 7th and 8th graders to attend. Students were up there taking culinary classes at the Academy. There is great communication between the schools.
- There are opportunities through the Academy to get to know students from around the world.
- The best thing I ever did was send my kids to the Academy. It provided my kids with great athletic and educational opportunities.
- Northeast Kingdom Learning Services is an asset here.
- CCV is alternative pathway for folks.
- Springfield College and Lyndon State College.
- The Area Health Education Center is an educator of the medical world keeping the highly qualified doctors qualified to practice medicine here. Programs allow them to keep up to date with their skills and requirements for certification.
- The Adult Services career center has LNA courses or other offerings that lead to a trade or industry recognized certificate.
- Osher Lifelong learning opportunities are offered weekly at Catamount Arts and lifelong learning for adults and children of all ages.
- The Town Farm and bike path are wonderful resources for the community but certainly young people.
- The St J school district partnered with VSAC or offer every 8th grader that graduates from school a \$2000 scholarship per year once they complete high school. This is ongoing and counselors come to talk to 7th and 8th grade students about college. This started with class of 2016.
- As a new person in town, we decided to come here because of the Academy, but we have two younger children. We visited St J school, Lyndon, Good Shepherd – did our homework. Our daughter had a phenomenal experience at the St J School. She gave it a 10 from day 1. We are coming from the other side of the river and you guys have a fantastic facility and fantastic school, outstanding administrators, have been 110% impressed.
- DAART team is a group community-wide to come together to address drug problems in the area with subcommittees to meet on specific issues.

What are the Challenges?

- Family engagement at the school. It is hard to reach parents to become involved.
- As a former school board member, I can say we barely had any parents participating.
- At election time, only about 10% of parents of children go to vote.
- We have wonderful programs and teachers but we do not worry enough about the affordability of this. Where is the money going to come from to maintain what we have? It isn't that the school board is opposed to these things, but either local or state wide, the state can't afford the cost per child in the state. Small classrooms are nice, but they are very

expensive and sometimes we don't think about that connection. We want to have everything for our kids, but can we support it

- We don't get new businesses and employment so people can afford to pay the taxes that go along with this education system.
- There is a lack of communication. For example, where do parents find information about their kids going to college? If you want to sign up for CCV, its available right here on Main Street, but if someone didn't know, where would you get all this information from?
- How can we as a community define ourselves by assets and successes and market community based educational projects that benefit the community?
- The way that the local newspaper covers St J school is blasphemous at times. You can walk through the school and you don't see the things that the paper has written about.
- I cancelled my subscription to the paper because the coverage was so biased and disgusting, calling children unruly and when the budget kept getting voted down.
- One of the deficits in our community is that the St J school gets a bad rap in our community and that is undeserved. It should be praised, it's a great place.
- Hearsay and rumors about the school prevent people that don't actually go in the school and see it to see what a great place it is. It is hard to counteract this perception.
- There are two separate groups in the community. How to bring people together and communicate across groups? Early childhood, and even expectant mothers, may be the place to start.
- There is a lot of turnover in teachers and administrators.
- Agriculture and forestry is the bedrock of this area. The number of farms in the area has declined significantly. Things have changed radically and we are not responding to that challenge.
- The opiate addiction problem has become more and more complicated. Alcohol and drug abuse statistics are frightening. In the past 15 month people using maintenance BAART

program has grown by 347%. Currently there are 16 pregnant woman in the community who are opiate addicted. That means that in 4 years, kindergarten classes will be filled with children who will be impacted by that drug use. We can't continue to kick it under the rug and pretend it doesn't exist.

- The state is struggling with their budget. How do we sustain this money and this work? If we focus on the earliest years and bring parents along.
- There is a dichotomy in St. Johnsbury that got worse when the prison was built. Before the prison, only 4% of the child care center qualified for free and reduced lunch, now 93% qualify there is a lot of poverty in our community that is concentrated and suffering at every level.
- Substance abuse issues have eroded the community.
- The majority of the interaction that police have with students is when something is going wrong. The police would like to have more of a connection to schools that are more positive rather than just the bad guys. The police don't often get asked to do this.
- The schools do not have a substance abuse officer. It has been thrown around but the school does not want to fund position. The police department is funded differently and cannot fund a full time officer.
- We need to figure out how to use resources available to the community in a fluid and creative sort of way to draw on creativity and intelligence and desire and care that people are showing in a way that directs resources more effectively to meeting challenges.
- As a parent, its not just the newspaper and the media, but there seems to be a community-wide misunderstanding about what is happening at the school, the quality of the teachers and education, and at the root of it, the quality of the children there. Sometimes it looks like discrimination based on economic standing. That scares me.
- We are creating an "underclass" of people that don't own a home, don't have access to health care, etc. Vermont doesn't like that. There were good jobs here that workers took pride in but that's not here anymore.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Create more of a police presence in schools. Foster positive interactions with law enforcement.
- Take a more aggressive approach to defining and celebrating community assets. Share information to celebrate the assets of all the educational entities in the community and start to look at ourselves in a different way.
- Invite some of the community members who are responsible for informing people new to town to share assets of the school (realtor told people don't send kids to St J School). Have people that are responsible to spread the word be there to see what is happening. Have a more accurate word to spread.
- Invite the community to experience student meals, plays, etc. they would be happy to go there anytime.
- Realtors could be invited not to lead their advertising for homes with "school choice."
- The power of hearsay can be positive. Anytime the opportunity presents itself, we should speak positively about anything and everything. Turn around the negative and convince others about the positivity of the school.
- Expand the mentorship program and try to pair up responsible adults with kids who need someone.
- Expand mentorship to include young mothers who are addicted. Offer a community of support rather than just one source and so their kids have a network of support that is a little more organized than it currently is.
- Develop a team to support kids of parents that struggle with drug problem through DAART.

- Without large businesses in town, the financial base struggles. Education in town is directly linked to the resources, employment opportunities, businesses, etc. that are or are not here now.
- Education and business are related. Good education attracts business to the community because you'll have an educated workforce and increased quality of life that draws people to want to live here.
- The newspaper could be a really effective tool. Kids could write about the school or teachers, or all of us. Letters get read.
- The school has a newspaper this year. The Caledonia record is going to publish their newspaper as an insert.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Appreciated the conversation about getting people into the school. There are lots of opportunities to bring the general public into the schools to dispel myths and showcase different opportunities.
- It is exciting to see the amount of pride and assets and that you're being proactive about how we address these.
- Loved the idea about community based policing. It is great when police are coaches and in schools to give kids great early exposure to police as positive. Addiction is a statewide problem. Lund is a great statewide resource for addicted moms that may be helpful. Continue nurturing partnerships and relationships as you think about education. Experiential learning is an important part of education. I would encourage you to consider nurturing internship opportunities.
- Very impressed with your asset list. There is a large amount of leadership and awareness in this room. Going forward, you will have opportunities to capitalize on that. When you talked about your challenges, there was redundancy. They really had to do more with societal conditions that communities have to confront and how you contend with the cost of a modern education as demand increases on schools. The most interesting issue, because it is so solvable, is community perception. What I heard that is that people with a direct connection to the school are supportive and proud, yet you seem to grapple with the issue where community image is not reflective of reality. That is a serious problem but is good because it can be solved.
- Impressed by list and by pride of educational assets. To hear people talk about with pride, recognizing problems but not overly challenged by them. I liked community policing. That is very critical. I also liked the heresy comment. It can certainly an go both ways. Starting good rumors is a good technique.
- Took note of number of assets shared. This is exciting and promising for the community. Diversity is both an opportunity and a challenge – both in economic needs and opportunities and also culturally – that is something we can continue to grow on. There is a way to tell the story in a way that is sensitive and accepting. A lot of conversations similar to what we have had in the health care world – a lot of hope in taking these conversations forward.
- Connect with students at the academy. This is a great resource.
- Didn't open with academy but started with what you're doing in the public sector. People are watching what you're doing in early ed. People are impressed and St J is the lead where people want to invest. Its not necessarily news that the newspaper has a certain perspective – the interesting opportunity there is that communication is changing. How to take advantage of new ways to communicate?
- I love that the perception is the problem and not the reality. That's huge. You can work with that.

Youth and Creative Economic Opportunity

Resource Team: John E. Adams, Paul Costello (facilitator), Alex DePillis, Greg Gerdel, Michelle McCutcheon-Schour, Jenny Nelson, Chris Recchia, Andrew Savage, John Sayles, Misty Sinsigalli (scribe), Lars Torres

What are the Assets in this Area?

- St. J Academy has the Future Business Leaders of America group.
- There is unused space that we can develop into something for kids.
- There are small economic sources that if put together could make a real difference. There are plenty out there, we just need to tap into them.
- St. J Academy is huge asset. It offers a world class education and technical training for wide range of the student population, not just a subset.
- St Johnsbury is culturally diverse. We have exposure to things such as arts and cultural programs
- The location is an asset because of the highways.
- We have five little league fields for kids.
- The Ski and Recreation industries.
- We have the Kingdom Bike Trail and the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.
- People in St. Johnsbury have an amazing work ethic.
- Education in St. Johnsbury is holistic in nature. There is a good elementary, The Academy, legacy institutes, CCV.
- The Recreation Department attracts people from 13 Vermont towns and two different states for summer programs.
- The Kiwanis pool.
- We are a walkable town.
- There are a lot of places to volunteer.

- We have the Mustard Seed café for youth.
- There is guided independence in youth here. Kids who find mentors and figure out what they want to do.
- The Academy runs the entire recreational program which is a great benefit.

- We have a community farm.
- St. J holds a lot of land that could be developed for use by community.
- A lot of willingness of organizations to allow youth to be involved in planning of events and what is going on in town.

What are the Challenges?

- There is a strong cultural push to force young kids to figure out what they want to do in life early on. Instead could we emphasize a local education or trade?
- There is a high homeless youth population. 17 homeless youth were counted on one day. This is a problem that needs to be addressed.
- The prevailing attitude is that you have to leave. You don't keep your talents local and stay – youth look to get out.
- There is a fatalistic economic attitude by adults. It's always the wants versus the haves.
- We are a crossroad for east west traffic and a northern gateway. We should be able to attract viable businesses given the accessibility (railways, roadways).
- There is a perpetual cycle of poverty. People are underqualified for jobs and aren't allowed accessibility to jobs like others are.
- The manufacturing job market gets flooded by people with years of experience because the big plants close and dump adults into entry level positions taking them away from young adults.
- Youth services run by elementary school. There are more funds are being used for youth services than actual education.
- Real or perceived taxes in area that you live in – taxes, cost of living, tax advantages.
- The State takes so long to approve permits that it deters businesses from coming into town.
- St. J is not offering what young adults (in their mid-twenties) want which would make them want to stay. What do we need to do to attract them to be here? The Challenge is to create the means to give people the resources they need to live here and stay here.
- The cost of living is a big deterrent.
- We need to create capacity for high-tech interest in our youth.
- We have an aging demographic. There is push back from certain age group but could also be an economic opportunity for young adults.
- Drugs are a presence here. Other cities in the state have formed taskforces to coordinate police and social services and a community campaign to take back parts of towns.
- There are fewer jobs for young adults so they do not have the experience when graduating and going out into the workforce.
- Young adults who have been incarcerated can't find a job or housing. They have nowhere to turn.
- Alternative schools are available but they are not funded like other schools. They're labeled and therefore families are feeling unsupported by their community.
- There are plenty of open spaces in town, but it is a matter of figuring out how to use them.
- People feeling isolated here.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We should incubate new ideas and start looking at other options. Possibly a tech industry?
- Localize jobs.
- Use armory for possible incubator space, or identify other spaces.
- Create a "home base" for a program that would allow kids to have a place to go after school. Almost like a Boys & Girls club or YMCA.
- Collaborate with other area schools on a program that would bring teenagers together.
- Incorporate alternative schools. Work with UVM or another institution to offer education in more compatible skills like IT development.
- Develop a program where it doesn't matter what school you go to that brings it would bring in all skill sets. A hands on program that is not discriminatory.
- Develop incentives for businesses to come and stay. Seek support from the state.
- Build a Mixed Use Space for twenty somethings. Create a situation for community. Build a mixed-used space that brings in mixed housing as well as other things.
- Increase public transportation in general.
- Develop internships through local schools and local organizations/businesses.
- Market what we have. We are unique and we want to keep it that way. Market our skiing and outdoor opportunities.
- Promote national service opportunities such as AmeriCorps, VISTA, or Peace Corps.
- We should create a competition for youth that feeds back into the community.
- Partner students with businesses so that both groups can learn from each other.
- Develop universal Wi-Fi for downtown.
- Expand use of facilities that are available at academy for kids that aren't in school, twenty somethings/younger kids/ kids not at the academy, for a discount or scholarship. Help get them the skills so they can go into community and work.
- Deliberate investment strategy to create art/incubator spaces in buildings we already have.
- Build a team of community members with experience in running small business, students to develop the art/incubator space and investment strategy.

- Kingdom Development Corporation could be investor.
- Create a network of mentors.

- We need a vision for what needs to be done with the Depot Square building. It is a downtown eyesore and something that people are passionate about doing something about.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Marginalized families need to feel included, not excluded. Families should feel like they have ownership.
- Leverage what young people are good at so that it can give them a reason to stay.
- Leaders need to take information we get and actually do something with it.
- Need to think about affordability. Affordable, mixed housing.
- Look at transportation options. Walkability and care share options.
- Youth are working in different environments. Look at online connections and youth community space.
- Think about opportunities to access capital.
- Connect youth to seniors.
- Community Wi-Fi is a great step towards economic development.
- Raise expectations one student at a time.
- Empower individuals. Surround them with resources that they need to move forward.
- Lower the risk to do business here. Give them the resources they need to establish and stay.
- Find creative ways to put a bounty on things.
- Unlock aspirations.
- Don't invent things that young people don't want.
- Ask yourselves the question - How do we change our narrative? We don't necessarily want to change the identity but do need to change who and what we want to attract for people and businesses.
- We are an invention state. You want to inspire students to move forward with their dreams and what they want to do.
- Incubators are a great way to get more people involved.

Housing

Resource Team: Will Belongia, Ted Brady (facilitator), Mike Fife (scribe), Sara Gilbert, Shaun Gilpin, Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup, Kathleen Kanz, Alex MacLean, Nancy Owens, Tim Volk

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Colonial Apartments have been there since 1928. They are full with great tenants. The tenants are all 55 and over.
- The architecture is beautiful.
- Houses are affordable as compared to other urban areas in VT.
- There is a lot of open space for potential housing.
- Scenery.
- Fresh Air.
- Water.
- Vibrant neighborhood communities.
- Community centers.
- Rural Edge.
- St. Johnsbury's infrastructure is an asset. We have great schools, the Academy, Cornerstone School, a good waste water system, and walkability.
- Local forests.
- Safety.
- Accessibility to stores.
- Kids can walk to school.
- There are some handicap accessible apartments.
- There is a large amount of housing stock.
- Rural Community Transport Network is very impressive and FREE! This has doubled the usage of public transportation.
- People really care about the community and set deep roots here.
- There is lots of green space.
- There is a lot of available garden space.
- Main St. has a lot of beautiful homes. Many were recently rehabilitated.
- We have a mixed use areas for residential and retail.
- Landlords are able to show apartments easily.
- It is simple to find housing if you can afford it.
- To a certain extent, there are distinct cohesive neighborhoods with their own identities.
- People are very polite and say hello in passing. You can make friends here.
- There is a huge rich history.
- Volunteer groups.
- Food shelf run out of a local property.
- 24 hours emergency services.
- No gated communities.
- People who live here can work many different places.
- We have a good regional hospital.
- There are nice old houses.

What are the Challenges?

- Colonial Apartment building doesn't have handicapped accessible bathrooms.
- Parking is a problem. It's hard to visit people without getting a ticket.
- Housing stock is old and needs work.

- With the exception of USDA support it's hard to get money to develop affordable rental housing.
- Winter is very challenging.
- Walkability is seasonal due to visibility, sidewalks, fall risks, poor sanding/salting.
- There is a lot of blight and dilapidated housing.
- Old Victorians are VERY large and that makes them expensive to maintain.
- There is a lack of affordable, high quality, rental units (not subsidized).
- Rural Edge does a good job serving low income folks but can't/doesn't help with market rate apartments.
- If you're not buying there aren't great options.
- Youth leave because they can't find housing.
- There is no homeless shelter or emergency housing.
- There is talk but no money.
- Affordable housing isn't mixed income and that means that low income folks get lumped together and this creates problems.
- We have an aging housing stock.
- High maintenance of older buildings drives up rent.
- There is some good housing but there is also a lot of "not so good" housing.
- There is not money that isn't from the state.
- State money has lots of rules and regulations with it.
- Rural Edge does a great job restoring stuff but has to follow established rules and regulations which make it more expensive.
- There is limited accessibility for people with limited means.
- First and last month rent up front are hard to come up with for folks in poverty.
- There are many empty places because landlords have gotten screwed. Landlords need help with this.
- There is a lot of unsafe and unhealthy housing stock and not much by way of code enforcement.
- Landlords are trying to squeeze every nickel out of tenants without reinvesting into the tenants.
- Tenants sometimes don't pay rent so landlords can lose their home because they couldn't evict especially with cold winters.
- Landlords can also be unfair and can't sell because no one will buy and tenants are also forced to leave.
- There is a very serious problem with single family home rental shortage. Multifamily units are less of a problem.
- There is a concentration of subsidized housing in the downtown core (Depot st.).
- The major intersection is unsafe.
- Landlords don't do reference checks. They take anyone in and don't care about the property.
- There are landlords who don't rent if they can't find quality tenants.
- Some sections of town are less walkable (out by memorial) or not walkable at all and it's a detriment and risk to those trying to access services.
- There are many absentee landlords who live out of state.
- The economy is lagging.
- When improvements are made to home, taxes increase which makes it hard to create home improvements.
- There are a lot of silos in housing, and no central place for addressing needs, concerns, community planning, code enforcement, etc.
- There are State level challenges because the state may not understand town needs.
- Towns can't make mixed income housing because the state wants affordable housing all together because that's where funding is at the federal level.
- VT statutes say that town is responsible for keeping units safe and clean. Depot Square is not safe and clean. VT State housing is now paying all rents on the unlivable units. Bedbug infestation and drugs and alcohol are all problems there.
- Coming into town there are code violations.
- Academy wanted to buy Depot at one time.
- The Depot Building is not insulated.
- The Republican block is also problematic even though it was just bought.
- These downtown buildings prevent folks from coming downtown.
- St J has a large burden in it with all the social services and people want to come here to access services but the housing isn't there for them.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Make one of the vacant buildings into a homeless shelter with volunteer staffing.
- Increase code enforcement.
- Become a community that is proactive and not reactive.
- Find an appropriate place for homeless shelter and put it there rather than wait and then have folks object to it.
- There should be a requirement for a certain number of market rate units if low income subsidies are being used. Make it so there is only mixed housing.
- Incentivize tax breaks for those willing to create mixed income housing. This would be legal but creating bylaws would go against fair housing law.
- Enforcing existing codes could be low-hanging fruit.
- Create a position dedicated to complaints. 20 years ago there would only be 2 complaints in a month and now there are 5 a week.
- Right now that position does not fit in the budget. Come to Selectboard meetings and voice your opinion in getting that position filled!
- Provide incentives to get people over the hump to get people more energy efficiencies.
- Technical support to help figure out what is an appropriate scope of work – what's feasible.

- Contractors are on a list maintained by Efficiency VT that can help with weatherization.
- In other towns if you do certain improvements you can get a 3 year break from property taxes. This could free up money for energy efficiencies.
- People with bad histories with landlords, coming out of incarcerations, need housing. Can they help rehab buildings where they will be living?
- We need advocacy on the state and federal level – get those who can to change the system so that St. J can promote mixed housing.
- Collaborate to develop a space for a real housing coalition and coordination in housing organizations.
- Need for more community input into the way funding is distributed.
- Community financing to pick off one property at a time on a local level to avoid federal level regulations – use local banking and local citizens.
- One man started painting houses one by one and town got involved. There are grass roots possibilities for cleaning up properties.
- Fixing up homes is contagious. New sidewalks and curbing makes people want to fix up yards and then homes, etc...
- Owner occupied housing.
- Develop a PACE program – property assessed clean energy.
- Develop a way to pay for energy improvements over town through your tax bill. Get a loan from the town paid back through property taxes.
- Have a Christmas light contest in the multi-unit dwellings. Tenants or landlords could dress things up and build up community and diminish separation between low income housing stock and everyone else.
- The Fire Chief should do his job and enforce codes at Depot Square.
- Encourage landlords to give young first time tenants a chance.
- Develop an agency between a landlord and tenants and educate tenants to be better tenants.
- Create more condo complexes from some of the larger houses.
- Let's provide incentives and attract contractors to create more affordable market-rate condos and apartments.
- It is hard to find a place if you're downsizing when you retire. You can sell your place but can't because there is no smaller place to go so other families can't get into your place.
- Could the position for enforcement also serve as a funnel for resources and knowledge of weatherization, other resources that are available?
- Create a carrot and make sure that those that are out of code get information about getting up to code cheaply and the incentives that exist.
- Create continuing care situations for folks with a range of housing so folks can live there before they need help and then move through the systems as they need more help.
- There are national organizations that we could contact for help and have experience. Why not invite them to St J to help out?
- We may not want to segregate seniors either. Young people and old can help each other
- If there is senior housing it should have access to a gym/pool and healthy physical activities through the winter.
- Child care facilities would be a great thing to have in multifamily developments.
- Get a group of community members together to address walkability and bike-ability. Maybe work with Local Motion or another group as well.
- Develop a rotating pool of crowd source money.
- Form a cooperative of investors, landlords, real estate agents, etc... who can take on some of the housing issues.
- Create a real estate trust.
- Academy has kids learning the building trade. Develop an opportunity for them to come in and fix things up. They can get job experience and help the community. Kids work hard.
- The Academy used to build housing and they are already doing a lot of work on the St. J heritage center.
- Use work crews to help out.
- Develop a community program to place folks coming out of jail with contractors and teach them a trade. Concentrate on rehabbing the downtown area.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- I like the idea of a one stop shop for housing and making the code enforcement role a one stop shop for dealing with all the problems and good ideas.
- Assets were everything surrounding the housing and the challenges were specifically the housing. Many communities have challenges around the housing as well but here it's just how to solve the dilapidated stock.
- I am very impressed with the turnout and that's a great first step. When looking at solutions there was a wide spectrum. In many other places in the state there is a challenge in development but here it's there and needs rehab. I like the ideas around developing pride and community investment in housing. Heard ideas around incentives to go along with the enforcement.
- Every session has talked about code enforcement and Depot Square. There is a feeling that people don't want the owner to benefit one more minute and give him no bail out but yet that housing is a cornerstone to the community. It will take a lot of time to crack that nut.
- There is a lot of interest in even small improvements being made. Encourage folks to develop a strategy of how to impact the economy overall. There is interest in making weatherization improvements but it's hard to work with landowners on that.
- Love the creativity in how to use the housing stock that exists.

- May be ways to access money for revolving loan fund. There are lots of ideas from the small local all the way to state and federal level incentives and regulations. Keep thinking on all those levels and don't allow people to shut you down on all those levels. There is a need for more tenant voices. Hearing depot square residents is going to be very important.
- We didn't hear a lot about affordability for tenants, but heard a lot about new collaboration and creative solutions. It is very affirming to hear a real sense that St J has a strong self-identity and care for each other.

Community Gathering Spaces

Resource Team: Jenna Banning (scribe), Susan Elliot, Jeff Francis, Eddie Gale, Michael Moser, Steve Patterson, Jill Remick, John Tracy, Lisa Viles, Susan Wehry, Jenna Whitson (facilitator)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- St. Johnsbury has over 20 meeting/gathering venues within a half mile of each other, which is something unique in Vermont.
- The Courthouse lawn hosts summer band concerts.
- St. Andrew's Church on Main Street has a beautiful interior and has received grants for exterior renovations and beautification.
- The Town Forest Pavilion is open to the public for gatherings and events.
- The Arlington Woods is another good town forest.
- It's good to have these forests here, as it allows kids to reconnect with the woods and nature by using these spaces for activities.
- The Catamount Arts Center hosts the Green Mountain Film Festival and other classes. The Center hosts many different events and does outreach.
- There are two public areas that are flooded during the winter to become public skating rinks.
- The park is used in the summer for tai chi.
- Maple Fest and the Fall Festival are community-wide events.
- The old Train Depot Center is a great welcome center, farmers' market in the winter, and starting line and finish line for two races.
- The Rec Department is using the former Club at Old Mill.
- The Academy Field House and its swimming pool is an asset.
- Red Mill Park has nice tables and picnic benches on Concord Avenue, and is the headwaters for a trophy fishing area.
- St. Johnsbury is going to be the trailhead for a 96 mile rail trail to Swanton, which will be a huge economic boost for the community.
- The new bike shop in town has hosted a series of Slow Rides for families, which is a good social event.
- There's a sense of spaciousness in St. Johnsbury, which is intangible but an attractive part to the quality of life in the city.
- The Kiwanas host a safe swimming pool that is open to the public, which is the only 100% totally open to the public swimming space in the U.S.
- For the most part, the town is very walkable. The large lot behind the Green Mountain Mall and Job Lot is going to be used as a circus ground for Circus Smirkus this summer.
- The St. Johnsbury Athenaeum is a public library with free public access to the internet, spaces to sit and think, and free programming. It hosts First Wednesday cultural events, arts and culture programs, organizations for seniors and events for seniors, and provides free access to information and entertainment. It also offers assistance with technology and the children's programming (Acorn Club) reaches out to several children's centers in the area, provides free books, and runs a second-hand book store. The art gallery is free to the public.
- Catamount Arts Center hosts open mic nights, and is a great open and lively spot.
- The Fairbanks Museum is free to St. Johnsbury residents.
- The churches in St. Johnsbury are assets.
- The St. Johnsbury Town School is advertised and intended to be a community gathering space. The Annual Town Meeting is held there.
- The skate park is a (potential) great asset.

What are the Challenges?

- The location of the skate park is a challenge. The park was built on the grounds of the former Skate Shop, which allowed supervision and free helmet use, but once the shop closed, it became a problem. A lot of children want to use the park, but because it is slightly secluded, it attracts criminal activities like drugs and graffiti. It almost relies on adult supervision, especially police supervision.
- The park would be better if it were in a more open spot or at ground level, which would allow for greater neighborhood supervision and more kids to access it.
- There is an open mic night for youth every Friday night at the Catamount Arts Center, but overall, there are few places for youth to hang out by themselves besides street corners.
- There is no warming shelter. There had been conversations about creating one, but nothing materialized because no space wanted to take it.

- People are drawn to the rivers, but there is still a historical perception of the rivers as a source of sickness and pestilence as they were 50 years ago. The city needs to elevate the perceived value of the river - "Where Rivers and People Come Together."
- Littleton, the town across the river, has developed a Riverfront Walk. St. Johnsbury should have a comparable area, such as creating spaces to sit and garden. With 3 rivers coming into town, there are a lot of opportunities to do this and improve the brownfields that are on the riverfront.
- There are few places to walk and sit. There are a few pocket parks and other green spaces, but they are very small, and few have been put in recently.
- The forests are being challenged by invasive plants that are threatening the biodiversity and ability to access the land. There are also problems with litter and needles in the forests and other places around town.
- There is a big hole on Main Street that will be filled in with a Convention Center. It is a challenge to see this actually happen. Right next to this hole is the old Armory, which has a lot of issues, and next to that is a church building that is deteriorating. The deteriorating buildings downtown are a huge problem.
- The Armory is heavily polluted and is now closed so it can't be used as it was in the past for walk-in recreation events.
- St. Johnsbury is a Designated Downtown area, so it is eligible for money for revitalization. The community needs to get the word out to potential developers to help.
- Not everyone feels welcome in community events and in public spaces, which is especially true for low-income people.

There is definitely an income divide in town. Some people are not comfortable going to recreation events hosted at the Academy, and feel that the old community space was more welcoming.

- People from approximately 90 surrounding towns come into St. Johnsbury for performances, but there's no venue for the top-notch performers that are coming in.
- There is no place for middle-aged and older people to sit and socialize.
- The St. Johnsbury School and other organizations just submitted a 21st Century Grant to provide after-school programming, and are waiting to hear back.
- The community needs to get the word out to bring more people to the Athenium and to feel welcome there. There needs to be a sense of "cultural welcoming" and that it's "their" space.
- There's no community basketball court, and a shortage of green recreation space. People feel like they're trespassing when using public spaces because they're cutting across income lines.
- There needs to be a resources for people looking for emergency housing in St. Johnsbury.
- NECKA is not available on the weekends.
- There is a serious drug problem. The community can provide more opportunities that are more accessible for people who are on "hard-times" and not currently accessing the public resources that are available to them.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- The community can put in benches on Main Street, which has a lot of nice trees.
- The community can plant trees on Portland Street and other entrances to St. Johnsbury and strategically put benches to encourage people to walk, which will have multiple benefits.
- BCBS has a program that Newport used for its walking trails and that could be replicated in St. Johnsbury.
- The summer recreation program that is run through the Academy could create outdoor spaces to encourage outdoor recreation (ie kayaking) and fishing (ie the Let's Go Fishing program).
- The Lyndon State College hosts a summer Adventure Camp program, and the Rec Director (Joe Fox) will develop an introduction to water day in St. Johnsbury event.
- The community should push the Select Board to decide what to do with the Armory Building at Town Meeting 2016. Should we sell it, level it to become parking, or reuse it. The question has been around since 2005 but the Select Board has refused to take action, which has created a public hazard.
- The decision on what to do with the invasive species in the Town Forest and Arlington Woods were left in the hands of the Select Board, but have not made any decisions for the past years, and the forests are now completely choked. The community needs to bring this up to the Select Board again

with the old plan, or else two of the great outdoor spaces in the city will become unavailable for use.

- Youth in the area could be used to tackle the invasive species, with a lot of adult supervision (following the example of the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps in Richmond).
- The community should find out more about the Convention Center and how it will be used.
- The river space at the end of the bike path and the old Purina building could be transformed from a wasteland to somewhere with a "lot of positives."
- There could be a performance space, like a Band Shell on the waterfront, which would provide a lot of economic opportunity.
- St. Johnsbury should create a hockey arena.
- There should be a free shuttle along Railroad St, Easter, Main, and Maple.
- The Athenaeum is thinking of developing a survey targeted towards people who aren't using the space; this survey could also get ideas from others in the community to find out what they would like.
- The town budget has a line item for beautification projects, but the beautification volunteer committee is very small, and can't deal with all of the issues. The community could incentivize people to get involved and develop their own ownership of the

town's land, such as the public parks, which aren't very well-maintained over the summer. There isn't any money allocated for Parks in St. Johnsbury, and the community should consider allocating more money for maintenance and clean up.

- There needs to be a regular "everything in one place" bulletin to notify residents of what's going on in the town. One participant has been working on Welcome Packets for visiting performers, and is willing to share information and work together with people on this initiative. Welcome Packets could also be provided for new residents, including coupons to local businesses and resources.
- The Catamount Arts Center sees its role as an outreach actor and would like to help advertise events in the region. They are "trying to be a repository and an outlet, not only for Catamount Arts, but also for other organizations in the region."
- The editorial page of the Caledonia Record is very negative, especially towards the youth. There is an Opinion Page in the Record, and people could contribute positive pieces in order to counteract the current "doom and gloom" attitude and become "positive opinion makers."

- The Recreation website will advertise youth and recreation events and resources.
- The Northeast Kingdom Youth Services operates a Summer Central Calendar, which is a great resource, and should be donated to so they can afford to send calendars to people as education on what's available over the summer.
- Since public transportation is a limiting factor for people accessing events, the community should educate people on what transportation is available.
- The community can develop a Volunteer Clearinghouse to coordinate potential volunteers and organizations / causes. People can be mentored to learn how to get involved. A Community Time Bank, where individuals can sign up online with their skills and experience, was discussed as one potential way to get people involved. The existing but underutilized Equal Exchange Space out of the Justice Center could also be used for this.
- The town can develop a large central outdoor space with lots of opportunities and space to accommodate a lot of people. This will create momentum to encourage use of other spaces. There should also be a gathering space that is available in the winter.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There seems to have been a lot of activity and engagement in the past, but that there has been a decline in recent years, and that now could be a great time to get the community reengaged, such as with the municipality and with the Select Board.
- There is a feedback loop, which grows momentum that encourages people to get out and build up support for all of the good things happening. Many members of the visiting team felt that there are a lot of opportunities for St. Johnsbury going forward.
- I encourage the idea of a volunteer community beautification project, and to make it highly publicized and focused on a space over a series of days to build momentum, engagement, and accomplish a serious task.
- It is extraordinary and "fabulous to see this energy and enthusiasm for your town." Very excited by the wealth of ideas.
- There seems to be an apparent divide between the haves and have-nots, so the visiting team appreciated the efforts tonight on how to bridge that divide. The discussion of "they" and "we" is very important, and the team liked the focus on bringing people together across socio-economic and diversity lines.
- I am encouraged by the turn-out and list of assets in each of the sessions, and noted that the challenges have been consistent.
- I appreciated the no-cost and low-cost ideas and emphasized that nothing is as great as events with success. I recommend that the community pick one of these no-cost or low-cost ideas, and just do it. There are a lot of low-hanging fruit projects, such as building benches or bike racks. These are simple, but can make a huge difference and make St.

Johnsbury seem very welcoming, and future projects will build upon these successes. The community not be deterred by the huge and ambitious things, and to move forward boldly.

- Since May is Older Americans Month and the theme of this year is "Get into the Act," I recommend that the community tap into their seniors and volunteers.
- The architecture and space in St. Johnsbury is unique.
- I really liked the term brought up by one of the participants: "fractured abundance." I agree that there a lot of great things in St. Johnsbury, but the community needs to make sure that these are shared and capitalized on, and not duplicated. I thought that a commuter bus could be great, and strongly believes that St. Johnsbury has the potential to become a center for baby boomers.
- I have been to 15-20 other Community Visit Days, and felt that throughout the day, the "intellectual investment in this community is unsurpassed." I believe that there is an opportunity to prioritize solutions, which will be difficult, but that the assets in this topic are very strong and provide a "phenomenal opportunity."
- Look at Barre and Montpelier for comparisons. There's massive gentrification in Central Vermont, and St. Johnsbury needs to pay close attention to make sure that the community's public spaces are open to everyone and to manage their assets to fight the sense of divide in the population. It is important to appreciate all of the different voices and organizations represented in today's session, but also to be aware of the voices that were not present, and to take advantage of those people's strengths too. It was agreed that St. Johnsbury has the spirit and ability to keep that at the center of the community.

Youth Forum Notes

Compiled from a youth forum held with over 40 St Johnsbury Academy students and VCRD staff on March 30th 2015

What do you think is successful about the St. Johnsbury Community? What do you worry about?

- The recreation program is a safe environment for younger and older kids.
- The Academy is a real success. It gives people a reason to stay in St. Johnsbury
- The community is really close, it's small but it is still a city.
- Our school makes dinner and integrates the community.
- Variety days, days to raise funds to do good, are successful.
- Catamount arts, the Fairbanks Museum, and the arts scene are great.
- The community has good supports for people who need it like Umbrella.
- There are clubs at the Academy – like the Environmental Club.
- The shops on Railroad Street are a good environment such as Kaplans, Natural Provisions, and other small businesses.
- The Farmers Market is a fun place to shop in the summer.
- The Kiwanis pool is nice and it sometimes gives free lunches to kids in the summer.
- The Congregational Church does community lunches.
- RCT Transportation is really important. You can get to places in town but also to other places like Burlington and Montpelier.
- The dorm community is a great resource – we don't use the internationalism to learn as much as we could.
- I worry about drugs in town. I saw the Hungry Heart movie – it is scary and nerve racking.
- Certain parts of town are off limits because you worry about safety and drug use. Areas like the bridge and the skate park.
- Eastern Ave going downtown has negative vibes on the north side. Businesses come and go. It feels like a dangerous area.
- Walking to Bailywicks feels sketchy.
- I worry that I might not have enough experience when I leave school, there are not enough internships for careers.
- I worry about poverty in our town. Our school is successful and brings in money but there are a lot of people living in poverty.
- Connections are weak between the Academy affiliated community and the non-affiliated community.
- There is a big community service day twice a year – that is very powerful.
- The St Johnsbury/Lyndon Institute game is a fun event for families and a fun rallying point for the school community.
- I am concerned that the town needs to grow with time and not stay stagnant. I want future economic opportunities so that I can live here and my kids can go to the Academy.
- Sports in St Johnsbury are big events regardless of social class.

What are things St. Johnsbury can do to be a dynamic, prosperous, and exciting place to live and learn?

- Add more clubs and athletic activities for community members.
- Host more events for the community that involve students, parents, and the town.
- Build a community rec center like the YMCA or a community center.
- Develop a mentor program for younger students that pairs academy students with younger kids. Give them someone to go to.
- Host an international student night or other activity to celebrate cultures. Bring in the 8th graders to tell them about international issues.
- Railroads could be a great improvement for traveling. There is a bus to Burlington but what about travelling to other destinations?
- A night for internationalism to undermine the ignorance and really use the international experience of students to ease tensions and connect internationals with the town better.
- More public transportation. There are only two taxis in town and they are very slow. More short transportation would be nice.
- It would be nice to tie in better with the St. J school. Get Academy students to go down there or have them come up.
- It would be great to have a place to eat. There is no real café in St. Johnsbury. We would like to see a place that is not McDonalds, but is not \$20 for a meal.
- We could build a spot like in Littleton where they have a small arcade, pinball, etc. A teen center for youth activities.
- Build an entertainment center with indoor activities like skating.
- Build a spot like the Boys and Girls Club in Burlington with basketball, computers, other activities.
- Need to give local businesses a way to get more credit. We should try and get students to go to local businesses more. Everyone wants to go to Littleton, rather than see what's local.
- We would like to see local stores provide more diverse products to attract students downtown.
- When we go to the movies, if we have to wait around, we want to have more regular stores for businesses vs. chains and going to Littleton.

- There are a couple of places, like the Mall, but the Mall has a negative view. It could be a good place if we put some effort into it – maybe we could put in a Target.
- For our safety, we could develop a “Blue Light System” like at colleges that would respond quickly to an emergency situation at the press of a button.
- RecFit could fit many of our ideas of a community center. It has enormous benefit but it is hard to get there. You have to walk through the sketchy part of town. Transportation to RecFit would be nice.
- Maybe the town could be unique – something no one else has, like a trolley system.
- Build a cool spot we could go with WiFi and games – something walkable from campus.
- RecFit is really expensive and the classes cost a lot of money. The poor can’t afford to go to the gym. Our gym isn’t open to the community. Even just a place with weights and free activities would be great.
- There is a state forest. It would be nice to incorporate nature better. Maybe we could do a better job of publicizing the forest. It is an enchanting place that is underused.
- If we are going to add businesses, they need to be more accessible. At night there is nothing open.

What is the role of youth? What can students do to make St. Johnsbury a better place to live and learn?

- We could inspire students to take schooling seriously,. We could especially help lower income students feel that we expect them to do well.
- We need to be role models.
- We have spring day at the Academy. Maybe we could do something like that for the whole community and not just for us. We could do something for the entire community and involve businesses.
- There is a big divide between day students and dorm students. We should be closer. Maybe we could do more activities that include both dorm and day students.
- Students could better use and support local businesses on the hill. It would help businesses boom.
- We need to meet together more like this. Meetings between the student government and the dorm council could do things like this to plan for our ability to move the town forward.
- Plan a job fair where we involve local people to tell us the skills we need for their vocation – like a career day organized by students.
- Have a master class open to the full community like teaching Spanish, cooking Chinese, etc.
- Resident students have a fun orientation at the beginning of the year with Scavenger Hunts, etc.. Perhaps we could host an orientation event for locals as well.
- Seniors pitch ideas for their Capstones, but sometimes they are not completed. A group like the National Honors Society could take on several of these ideas and make them happen.
- The town has little pride, we could bring a minor league baseball team here to get people together.
- We could make a walkable downtown area with no cars – maybe on Railroad Street.
- We could promote the town by using the internet, or perhaps creating a video made by students.



VII. St. Johnsbury Community Visit Participants

Daniel Adam	Anne Campbell	Katherine French	Carl Johnson
Susan Aiken	Scott Campbell	Jody Fried	Tom Joyce
Jerry Aldredge	Leah Carey	Barry Fudim	Adam Kane
Brad Alexander	Brandon Carpenter	Mary Beth Furr	Andrea Kane
Bob Amors	Nick Casey	Autumn Gainer	Jeannette Keenan
Sigurd Andersen	Maurice Chaloux	Linda Garey	Kerry Keenan
Tim Angell	Beth Champagne	Stephen Garfield	Betty Keller
Lew Apgar	Lydia Chartier	Brian Garrett	Dan Kenney
Doranne Aquino	Martin Cherry	Lenny Gerardi	Alice Kitchel
Michael Aquino	Susan Cherry	Ellen Gershun	Scott Kleinshrodt
Miel Ash	Beth Choiniere	Jason Goguen	Steve Kline
David Askren	Seleem Choudhury	Charles Grant	Tammy Kristen
Bridsel Atkins	Jay Churchill	Mary Grant	Judy Kurtz
Michele Authier	Stephanie Churchill	Alan Graves	Stefanie Lane
Nancy Babbett	Lestor Cleary	Jason Gray	Joane Lauer
Eric Bach	Mark Clough	Kelly Greaves	Debbie Leach
Ed Baker	Jennifer Corkins	Jenny Gundy	Bryan LeBlanc
Nelson Baker	Bruce Corretti	Kathy Gusryrah	Elinor Levy
Merten Bangemann-	Kim Cota	Carolyn Haggett	Tom Lovett
Johnson	Val Covell	James Hale	Kerry Ann Lucey
Tom Barth	Stan Crane	Mary Anne Hamilton	Jonathan Lynch
Tin Barton-Caplin	Diane Cummings	Rodger Hamilton	Carol Lyon
Nancy Bassett	Jack Cummings	Ken Hammer	Greg MacDonald
Brent Beck	Patricia Cutts	Ann Hare	Jean Maleski
Scott Beck	Judy Daloz	Christine Hargrace	Frank Maloney
Kimberly Behr	Bonnie Dasher-Andersen	Adrian Harhr	Tim Maney
Paul Bengston	Pam Dearborn	Cybele Hartman	Sharon Marshall
Sharon Biddle	Robert Desrochers	Ted Hartman	Shara McCaffrey
Chrls G Bjorklund	Celia Deterling	Lydia Harvey	Darcie McCann
Ranny Bledsoe	Ilene Dickinson	Barbara Hatch	David McGinn
Charlie Boisvert	Shaun Donahue	Lucy Haworth	Mardi McGregor
Eileen Boland	Angela Drew	Richard Hayes	Robert McMaster
Al Borsodi	Dianne Drown	Werner Heidemann	Kathy Metras
Cindy Boyd	Al Dunn	Maurine Hennings	Cathy Miles Grant
Jo Brannan	Chris Dussault	Kathleen Higgs	David Montague
Sarah Broome	Karlene Dussault	Layne Higgs	Diane Montague
Bob Brown	Donald Eaugeu	Lorna Higgs	Susan Montague
Greg Brown	Elsa Eckhardt	Tony Higgs	Jeffrey Moore
James Brown	Kristen Eckhardt	Bryn Hoffman	Ashleigh Moriarty
Jill Brown	Haley Edmondson	Ryan Holt	Mike Moriarty
Lisa Brown	Janet Edmondson	Tara Holt	Doug Morton
Tom Bryer	Eli Emerson	Clement Houde	Andy Mosedale
Don Burgess	Lisa Emerson	Kristen Huntington	Jamie Murphy
Robin Burnash	Tune Faulkner	Lorraine Impey	Melissa Murphy
Alice Burnham	Kayla Fitzpatrick	Trisha Ingalls	Irene Nagle
Eliza Burroughs	Patrick Flood	Angela Isaac	Angela Nevoid
Melissa Burroughs	Joe Fox	Greg Jackmauh	Leila Nordmann
Tammi Cady	Caroline Fred	Lauren Jarvi	Jeff Nummelin

Brian O'Farrell
 Jenna O'Farrell
 Lucille Oakes
 Kevin Oddy
 Susan Ohlidal
 Susan Olander
 David Ormiston
 De-Ann Page Welch
 Mary Parent
 Pam Parker
 Pat Parker
 Joseph Patrissi
 Kurumi Patton
 Jeannette Paulsen
 Martin Paulsen
 Connie Perry
 Jena Plazek
 Kim Poach
 Abby Pollender
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Judy Pransky
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 Sandy Raynor
 Mary Ready
 Mike Redmon
 Taylor Reed
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 Diana Reynolds
 Christopher Rice
 Michael Robey
 Cindy Robillard
 Brian Romeo
 Jan Rossier
 Anna Rubin
 Alan Ruggles
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 James Ryan

Jerry Ryan
 Eric Sakai
 Connie Sandahl
 Denise Scavitto
 Katrina Seymour
 Thomas Seymour
 Pam Smart
 Darlena Smith
 Don Smith
 Sarah Smith
 Dave Snedeker
 Jay Sprout
 Cynthia Stanton
 Amy Stetson
 Kirsten Sultan
 Bob Swartz
 Pat Swartz
 Michelle Tarryk
 Cara Thornley
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David Timson
 Laura Tobin
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*Thanks!! to the St. Johnsbury Academy
 culinary arts students and teachers who put
 on a delicious spread for the free community
 dinner on Community Visit Day.*

Over 200 community members attended!



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The Visiting Team met for a briefing luncheon at Catamount Arts on Community Visit Day.



The End



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